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THE HEART OF FIRE; OR, MOTHER VERSUS DAUGHTER. A REVELATION OF CHICAGO LIFE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

Author of "The Ace of Spades," "The Scarlet Hand," "The Witches of New York," Etc.

CHAPTER I.

"PLAYED OUT."

NIGHT had spread its sable mantle over the domes and spires of Chicago, for it is in that city—the young New York of the West—that this, our strange story, will find its verification.

Darkness, however, had not stilled into quiet the denizens of the ever busy city. The streets were thronged with people; lights flashed from the windows upon the moving crowd.

On the corner of Randolph street and Clark stood a roughly-dressed man, who, motionless as a marble statue, surveyed the busy scene around him. The stranger—for such apparently he was—was one whose age could not be read in his face; he might be thirty, or he might be fifty, yet no trace of old age appeared either in face or form.

Though dressed roughly—nay, poorly—yet one could see with half a glance that the man was a gentleman both by birth and breeding, for "blood will tell," even in our cage-guarded Republic.

The face of the stranger was singularly beautiful, although bronzed almost to the hue of the Indian by the hot kiss of the sun on the far Western plains, where civilization and nature contend for mastery in the persons of the settler and the savage. His features were regular and clearly cut; his long face, almost a perfect oval—pure type of the son of the south-west—with his massive and squarely-formed chin, piercing, dark-gray eyes, that shone like black at a distance, and the long, straight nose gave promise of dauntless courage and an iron will. His hair was as black as the ebony locks of the red savage, the prairie-master, and he wore it long, curling down over his ears; a long, silken mustache, black as his hair, shaded his full, sensual mouth. In figure he was straight and strongly limbed; and, had he been walking, a practiced eye would easily have guessed from his light, graceful step, that he not only possessed the suppleness of the cat but also the muscular strength of that animal.

For dress the stranger wore a common dark suit; his rough cowhide boots incased a foot almost as small as a woman's. A black slouch hat was pulled carelessly over his bronzed forehead.

Ex-lawyer, ex-duelist, ex-guerrilla captain and "ex-road agent"—as the bandits who rob the mail-coaches on the far western plains are called—Bertrand Tasnor was a man whom it were well worth while to look at the second time.

The story of Bertrand Tasnor's checkered life is briefly told.

Born in New Orleans, the child of a French creole, and a Boston Yankee, he united the dash and fire of the Gaul with the thrift and caution of the Northern.

Soon after Bertrand's birth his father died, and his mother moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, and resumed her maiden name, Tasnor. Hence it was that Bertrand bore the French name of his mother.

Bertrand, growing to age, studied for the

law, and in due time was admitted to the bar. He was regarded as a "rising man"—as one destined to a bright future; but, a shadow came over his fortunes and clouded the brightness of that future.

In a quarrel with a brother lawyer—the only son of one of the first families in the "Rock"—he fatally wounded him and was forced to fly for his life; not from fear of the law, but to escape the vengeance of the enraged relatives; for the officers of justice look with a lenient eye upon homicide even now in our border States; but, at the period of Bertrand's flight, which was some eighteen years before the time of which we now write—for one man to kill another in a street-fight was merely an accident, not a crime.

Bertrand's mother died soon after his flight.

Years rolled on. Bertrand's crime had been forgotten—lost in the lapse of time. The rebellion came. Little Rock was filled with armed men. Among them came one, Bertrand Tasnor, a cavalry captain in the Confederate service.

Some few of the old citizens who chanced to meet with the dashing officer—for Tasnor's name ranked with Fagan, Marmaduke and Crockett—remembered the name, but in the silent and stern soldier they could not discern a trace of the young and gay-hearted lawyer.

More years passed on; the rebellion ended. But, at the close of the war, Tasnor disappeared as mysteriously as he had come.

In '69 a band of brigands—"road agents," as they are termed by the settlers on the plains—appeared on the trail leading from Cheyenne to Denver city; and the result of their appearance was that Wells, Fargo & Co., together with sundry passengers in their coaches, were robbed. A bold and daring band of "road agents" were the robbers, who, though few in numbers, made up with dash and cunning what they lacked in strength.

For nearly a year Captain Death—such was the odd title of the leader of the "road agents"—and his band levied tribute on the Denver road; but, one bright morning, when swooping down like eagles from their haunt in the mountains upon a Concord coach, fondly expecting to "gather in" goodly bags of gold dust, and costly bric-a-brac, they received, instead, a deadly fire from Spencer rifles in the hands of United States troops!

The "road agents" had fallen into the trap laid for them by the managers of the express company.

Lead in lieu of gold or silver was not to the taste of the highwaymen, and inconsequently they departed.

The soldiers followed in pursuit, mounted on the coach-horses, and the result was that but a single one of the "agents" escaped, and he was the leader of the bandits—Captain Death in person.

He was followed closely by the soldiers, and his horse killed by a ball from one of their rifles, but as he was near a wooded

vine, he managed to gain the covert and escape.

The soldiers paused in the pursuit near the body of the escaped brigand's horse. It was a jet-black steed, with a bright blaze on the forehead and four white feet—a noble animal, despite the jockey's saying in regard to the four white stockings.

The lieutenant in command of the soldiers had been a captain in the volunteers, and had been with Steele in the retreat from Camden, after Banks' ill-fated expedition. In the dead steed he recognized an old acquaintance. It was the horse of the confederate colonel, Bertrand Tasnor!

And Captain Death, the leader of the "road agents," was Bertrand Tasnor.

Now having followed the fortunes of Bertrand from New Orleans, in the year 1870, to Chicago, in the year 1870, we will tell what brings him to the future metropolis, clad thus roughly and with so desperate a look upon the handsome face, which bore so few marks of the evil passions that reigned within his heart.

As he stands leaning against the lamp-post and gazing with an overcast brow upon the crowd that surged by him, he mutters to himself:

"Listen! Played out! that's the word, exactly; 'for the third time have I struck Chicago 'down on my luck'; as my English mate at the mines used to say. Well, I am 'down on my luck' in truth. One single dollar in the world and not a friend in town! Here I stand in this big city, friendless, helpless. I've taken mine by force so far, but now it looks as if I was at the end of my rope. Rope! and he laughed—a silent and a bitter laugh. 'I wonder what suggested that to my mind? I've been near enough to the rope in my day, though I've hardly got enough left now to buy one to hang myself with. Why should I despair, though? I've been in tighter places. When the blue-coats had the very rope around my neck to swing me up to a tall cottonwood; when I faced the derring of one young Meekhan, high twenty years ago; when that tiger-angel of a wife of mine, with her sweet, innocent face, golden curls and blue eyes, laid open my breast with a slash of my own bowie-knife, I stared death in the face; but I have lived through it all. Never say die! that was always my motto. I'll stick to it now. I wonder if that blue-eyed beauty whose kisses were maddening in their passion, but whose nature was a strange compound of a woman and a tiger, is still alive; or, did the blow from my hand kill her? And our child?—the man's voice softened as he spoke—'is she alive? I fancy I can see her great gray eyes before me now; the eyes so unlike either her mother's or mine. If she does live, I wonder if she carries in her breast a heart of fire, like that of her mother?'

For a few moments the man was silent. Old memories—thoughts of the two years when he had folded to his bosom a woman

with the face of an angel and the heart of a tiger, were with him, a haunting presence. "It's getting late," he muttered, suddenly; "I must find some shelter for the night. Some cheap 'shebang' in Wells street will do." And toward Wells street he took his way.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAGNET'S POWER.

As the clocks were striking nine, a young man, pacing with slow steps down South Clark street near Madison, was acting in a most eccentric manner. First he walked a little way down the street; then he came back again; then he halted on the corner for a few minutes; then he crossed over to the opposite side of Clark street, and walked a little way down on that side; then back again he came, and recommenced his pacing up and down as before; his eyes were constantly fixed on one point.

What was the object that possessed such attraction for the young man?

Behold a little fancy goods store and dressmaker's shop combined. The modest little sign over the door reads:

MRS. JONES, DRESSMAKER.

The window is filled with all the articles peculiar to a woman's wardrobe. No particular attraction in them to arrest the wandering eyes of a young man, unless, indeed, a young and pretty girl happens to be displaying them upon her person.

But softly! Beyond the window, in the interior of the little store, is the object!

It is the head of a young and beautiful girl—a maid possibly of seventeen and with a face as fair and fresh as ever poet pictured.

A face not round nor yet a full oval; the complexion as pure as snow, yet with the creamy tint of the white, sun-kissed peach. The faint crimson hue upon the transparent cheeks told of health and strength. Her hair was brown, flecked here and there with rich golden tints as the flickering light played and danced upon it, as though even the gas-flame loved to toy with the soft, silken masses. A full, clear gray eye lit up the pure, innocent face as the sun lights up the dawn. As she sits beyond the window, we can see but the head, throat and shoulders, yet we can readily guess from the shapely throat, and the exquisite swell and slope of the shoulders, that the maiden's form approaches as high to perfection as does her face.

She sits by the window, sewing steadily, her eyes bent down upon her work, unconscious that for an hour or more eager eyes have been watching her—watching her with many a tender and longing look.

And who and what is he, who thus, like a keen-eyed detective on the scent of crime, haunts the vicinity of the little shop?

Born in Chicago; native to the soil; by name, Edmund Kelford; by occupation, an architect; he was the son of one of the old settlers of Chicago, who had prudently invested in real estate when the city was just beginning to expand from the swamp village into the metropolis of the West. The result was that, without exertion on his part, Kelford, senior, like a hundred others, woke one morning and found himself a wealthy man, simply through the enormous rise in the value of property.

His father dying, Edmund—an only child—came into possession of his sire's property, and found himself one of the richest men, not only in Chicago, but in the entire West.

Edmund Kelford was a gentleman by birth as well as by breeding, one of nature's noblemen. Frank and honest to a degree; of a kind and genial disposition, he was a favorite with all. He did not indulge in the sports and dissipation so common to the young men of the age. Pure in mind, and honest in action, he had no superior in good reputation in the Garden City.

In person he was a fine-looking man of eight and twenty, with light-yellow hair, worn long and curling; full, blue eyes, and a manly and resolute face. Straight as a sapling in figure, he was also strong as a young colt.

And with all these advantages of face and figure, backed by a fortune almost princely in extent, the young man had fallen in love with a poor girl who worked hard for her daily bread in a little dressmaker's shop.

Over head and ears in love was he, too; one could easily guess that by his action, a man must love a girl deeply to walk up and down the sidewalk for an hour or so just for the pleasure of looking at her face in a window.

"She's working later than usual to-night," the observer muttered, as for the hundredth time he walked slowly by the window.

As Kelford paused on the edge of the sidewalk a young man, apparently about his own age, and with a carpet-bag in his hand, came up the street.

Kelford, in his abstraction, did not notice the approach of this stranger; he had eyes only for the charming face which had bewitched him. The new-comer halted and gazed in the direction indicated by the eyes of Kelford. His quick glance soon discerned the lovely face that the window framed. A good-natured smile came over his features. He readily understood his friend's mood, and glided up behind the young man.

"She is pretty, isn't she?" he said, with his face over the shoulder of the other.

"Sir!" exclaimed Kelford, the hot blood streaming up into his face at being detected, and turning, as he spoke, upon the intruder.

"Sits the wind in that quarter, eh, Ed?" cried the intruder, slapping Kelford familiarly on the shoulder.

The look of anger faded quickly from Kelford's face as he saw who had disturbed his devotions at the shrine of beauty.

"Why, Wirt, where on earth did you

come from?" he exclaimed, heartily, grasping the other by the hand as he spoke.

Wirt Middough was a young man of about the same age as Kelford, with dark-brown eyes and hair; a jovial spirit, full of life and fun. An orphan at an early age, he had been reared by an uncle, a wealthy lake captain, who had made his fortune in the grain trade.

Between Wirt and Edmund a frank and loyal friendship existed. They had been companions from boyhood, living side by side on Michigan avenue.

"Just back from the East," replied Wirt; "but, I say, Ed, how long has this been going on, eh?" And he pointed to the window as he spoke.

Kelford laughed, and the telltale blood fast crimsoned his cheeks at the words of his friend.

"As I came up I noticed that you were as motionless as a statue, and I couldn't guess for the moment what on earth there was in that window to interest you; but, now that I see what is there, I don't wonder."

"Isn't she pretty?" cried Kelford, his eyes sparkling as he looked upon the face of the girl bent so steadily over her work.

"Yes, as pretty as Saint Agatha," replied Wirt, after an earnest gaze.

"And she is as good as she is pretty," said Kelford, warmly. "The more I look at her face the more I wish to."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Yes," replied Kelford, seriously. "For the first time in my life I am truly in love."

"Met your fate, eh, as the gushing writers say?"

"Yes, this girl is my fate. I'm serious about it. I am only on speaking terms with her, yet I am fully satisfied that I love her."

"You, a millionaire, in love with a girl who sews for a living?"

"There's no disgrace in honest labor in this country, thank heaven!" cried Kelford, warmly. "But, come across the street to the shelter of that doorway, and I'll tell you all about it." He pointed to the opposite side of Clark street as he spoke.

"Go ahead."

So Wirt followed his friend.

CHAPTER III.

THE LOVER'S STORY.

Crossing the street the two friends gained the shelter of the doorway.

"Now, then, we can speak freely and without attracting attention," said Kelford. "Two months ago, Wirt, I didn't know that such a person existed in the world as Pearl Cudlipp."

"What an odd name!"

"Yes, but the prettiness of the first makes up for the ugliness of the second. She is a pearl, too, as pure and as fair as that jewel!" said Kelford, with a longing look across the street at the little window. "She must become my pearl, or I am undone."

Wirt laughed outright at this announcement.

"By Jove! you are in for it, eh, old boy?" and Wirt slapped his friend playfully on the shoulder.

"Yes, that's the truth," replied Kelford, a smile upon his fine features. "Rain or shine I have been here every night for the last month, excepting Sundays."

"And Sundays?"

"Sunday I sit at home all day long—dream of this girl's face, and wish that it were Monday," replied Kelford, with a mournful smile.

"Well, I never expected to see you in such a state of mind," said Wirt, utterly astonished.

"I never expected it myself," Kelford rejoined, slowly. "Not a single spark of that passion the world calls love ever entered my heart until my eyes fell upon this girl's face, and yet, at first, I did not like her. I thought her eyes too large, her complexion too pale, though then—as I afterward learned—she had just arisen from a sick bed; but there was something about her that attracted me, in spite of myself, to her side. The next time I saw her, her face pleased me better; and thus it was, I grew to like her more and more until, finally, I found that I love her. Yes, Wirt, that's the word; I love her with all my heart and soul. To see those large, gray eyes look with love upon me—to hear those lips tell me that my passion is returned, I would give five years of my life."

Earnest and deep were the tones that came from Kelford's lips. Wirt looked at his friend in astonishment.

"And yet you say you are but slightly acquainted with her?"

"That is the truth," replied the lover, with a sigh; "I wish that it were otherwise. You know that my office is just around the corner in Washington street. One morning, just after breakfast, as I was preparing to come down-town, Mrs. Kelford, my aunt, asked me to get her some thread, and bring it up with me when I came home to dinner."

"This trivial request brought about my infatuation. The store I stopped into for the thread was that over there. The girl that waited on me was the one whose face has so fascinated me. I got my thread, paid for it, and took it away; with it I also took the memory of this girl's face."

"And that you didn't pay for," said Wirt, jokingly.

"No, you are wrong; I have paid for it—paid by many a sleepless night and many an anxious wish. This girl is more trouble to me than all my money. To continue my story: her face haunted me; I felt that I must see her again."

"Well, that was easy enough," interrupted Wirt; "all that you had to do was to go to the store and buy something else!"

"That is exactly what I did do," said Kelford. "It is just two months since I first

went into that little shop, and I have been back there forty times."

"Forty times!"

"Yes, and each time I bought something; some little article."

"Well, of all the ideas—"

"It was good, wasn't it? I've spent in that little shop about twenty-five dollars. The trouble has been to find articles to buy. Of course I did not wish the girl to suspect that I came there solely to see her and had no use for the stuff I purchased. Between each visit I thought of nothing but what I should buy next. You see the stock over there is such a small one for a gentleman to select articles from. I've bought pins of all sizes—a paper at a time. I believe I've got about ten papers now. Then I bought gloves, stockings—luckily they had a small supply of gentlemen's stockings—I bought all that there was in the store, so that they would be obliged to buy more, and so give me another chance. Then I provided myself with gloves; I bought gloves for about sixteen relations—I invented them all for the occasion—all sorts of sizes. Finally, I was at my wits' end what else to buy, when I happily discovered a box full of spools of silk of different shades; so I've been laying in a supply of silk thread. I got to the end of the box to-day."

"That finishes your buying, then?" said Wirt, who had been heartily amused at his friend's recital.

"Oh, no. I've made a wonderful discovery. The spools are all different numbers. I'm going to discover that I've bought the wrong numbers in every instance, and go back and buy more."

"What have you done with all these things?"

"Got them all in my room up-town; they are very precious to me. I look at them every night just before I go to bed. They recall to me the memory of the woman that I love better than I do my own life. Each paper of pins, each spool of thread—each pair of gloves has some delightful memory connected with it."

Wirt was almost dumb with astonishment.

"Upon my soul, Ed, I never expected to see you in such a predicament. You, the cool, quiet money-bag—the 'old back' as you are termed by about all of your female acquaintances, over head and ears in love with a poor shop-girl."

"That's honest truth, Wirt," said Kelford, smiling. "I told you that I was infatuated. Ah, Wirt, when a man of my cool nature does let the passion of his being have full sway, a raging torrent only can compare with it in force."

"And this is the history of your love affair with this girl?"

"Yes. I discovered that she was called Pearl Cudlipp, by the elderly lady who keeps the shop—Mrs. Jones, I suppose—calling her, on one occasion, Pearl, and on another, Miss Cudlipp, while I was in the store."

"Don't you suppose that the girl knows you are in love with her, and that she is the magnet that attracts you to buy all those ridiculous little articles that you have invested in?"

"I don't know," replied Kelford, thoughtfully; "she ought to have guessed the truth by this time, if she has ever looked into my eyes, for I can't prevent the love from showing there. Ah! see, Wirt; she's left the window; then she'll go home soon."

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLAWS OF THE TIGER.

BERTRAND TASNOR proceeded leisurely down Clark street, to Wells, turned into that street, and walked slowly along in search of some cheap lodging-place for the night.

He had not proceeded far when a sign blazoned on a lighted-up window opposite attracted his attention. The sign read:

KANKAKEE HOUSE. BOARDING AND LODGING.

"Kankakee House?" muttered Bertrand, as his eyes fell upon the sign; "that reminds me of old times. It was in the town of Kankakee that I met her. Oh, what a woman that girl would have made if her heart had been only half as good as her face was fair! How the memory of that old time of passion comes back to me! How happy I was until I discovered that she was utterly worthless! If she had only been a good woman, how different might have been my life! At that time the road to good was as open as the path to evil. Her influence made me choose the last, and now what is the result? After eighteen years of crime, I find myself a broken, ruined man. I have made a dozen fortunes, and lost them as easily as I made them. And he knits his brows together gloomily at the thought.

"Why is it that evil seems to follow me? Has that woman cast a cloud over all of my life?" He paused for a moment after he put the question.

"I can't understand what brought her up into my mind to-night. I haven't thought of her for years; yet now, the old memory comes back as fresh as if it was but yesterday that we parted. That sign, too, reminds me of her. Bah!" and he ground his teeth together fiercely. "I am getting childish! Why should I think of her? She doubtless was in her grave years ago. A woman with the fiery pas-

sionate heart that she possessed was not suited for this life. Better for her, and better for the world, that she was out of it rather than in."

Then he turned his attention to the Kankakee House. It was a common two-story frame building, the lower part occupied by a saloon. The windows were curtained, so that the interior of this saloon could not be seen.

"A quiet place, apparently," mused Bertrand to himself; "I think that it will suit my purpose well enough. To-night, rest; to-morrow I must plan for action. Who knows what may turn up to aid me? They say that when one door shuts, another opens; all doors appear to be shut to me, just at present. My chance may come, though. Now, let's see what the Kankakee House looks like inside."

Bertrand crossed the street, and entered the little saloon.

It was plainly fitted up; a little bar at one end, and a few tables for the drinkers arranged along the side of the room. The saloon was empty except that behind the bar stood a short, fat, gray-headed man, evidently well advanced in years. His swollen and bloated face gave good evidence of the power of strong liquors. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and had just mixed himself a glass of liquor when Bertrand entered.

"Can I have a bed to-night?" Bertrand asked, as he advanced to the bar.

"Well, I reckon I kin put you up hyar," said the landlord of the Kankakee House—for the evil-looking old man was the landlord—in a voice strong with the peculiar twang common to some parts of the far West.

"What will it be? I'm not over flush with money," said Bertrand.

"We won't take your pocket-book, stranger," said the landlord, with a hoarse chuckle; "twenty-five cents will be the damage."

Bertrand gave the landlord a one dollar note.

"Yes," the landlord gave the change; then called out: "Lurrie, glass of ale."

A door to the right of the bar opened and a young girl entered the room. Bertrand gazed upon her in astonishment; only once before in all his life had he looked upon such a face.

The girl was apparently but a child in years. Little in form—a mere sprig of a woman—quick and graceful as a kitten in motion, she seemed to glide over the floor rather than walk. Her face was as round as an apple, fringed by a profusion of short, golden curls that clustered tightly to her head in little spirals. Her eyes were large, and a deep, lustrous blue in color. The little mouth perfect in its shape; the full lips red as the carnation-flower, and pointing in that exquisite fullness that told of passionate tenderness. A little, shapely hand and foot showed itself from the sleeve, and peeped out from under the short dress. To sum up all, the face of the child or woman—whichever she was—was the face of an angel.

Well might Bertrand Tasnor—cool "Captain Death," as the desperate "road agents" had termed him—be astonished at the sudden appearance of such a lovely creature, coming like a bright vision from paradise into the bar-room of the Kankakee House, evidently from its location and appearance one of the worst dens in Chicago, and that is saying a great deal; for Chicago, though perhaps not equal to New York in some respects, is in no whit behind it in places of evil resort.

If Bertrand Tasnor was astonished at the vision of loveliness in the shape of Lurrie Casper coming so suddenly and without warning into his presence, she was equally so when she looked into the bronzed but handsome face of the man who, by his daring, had won the name of "Captain Death."

In utter and speechless astonishment she gazed upon his features. A deadly whiteness came over her face; the blood deserted the full lips, and the ruby gave place to the tint of the opal; her eyes stared with a strange expression; the pupils expanded like in the eyes of the cat species when angry; the little white teeth were clinched firmly together. But for the support of the bar which she clutched, she would have fallen. Yet there was nothing apparently in the face of Bertrand to excite such emotion.

"Glass of ale for the gentleman, Lurrie," said the landlord, who did not notice the girl's agitation. It did not, however, escape the keen eyes of Bertrand.

With a great effort the girl recovered herself, and without speaking left the room. Bertrand watched her keenly.

"Your daughter, sir?" he asked the landlord.

"Yes," answered that individual, a little gruffly, as if he did not wish to be questioned further upon the subject.

"She's a beautiful girl," said Bertrand, who apparently did not notice the tone in which the landlord of the Kankakee House spoke, which was strange, for "Captain Death" was said to have a quick eye and that few things escaped him.

"Pretty 'nuff," returned the landlord, shortly. He evidently did not wish to be questioned.

"About how old is she?" said Bertrand, carelessly, as if he had no possible interest in the question, but had merely spoken for the sake of keeping up the conversation.

"Bout eighteen." The worthy host was making his answers as short as possible; but the effort failed in its object if the intention was to keep Bertrand from pursuing the subject. Tasnor was after information; he had a purpose in view and was determined to accomplish it.

"As old as that?" said Bertrand, apparently in great astonishment.

"Yea."

"I shouldn't have thought it."

The landlord made no reply, but busied himself behind the bar.

Bertrand returned again to the attack.

"By the way, is her mother living?"

"No," replied the landlord, beginning to get out of patience with his guest.

"Your daughter takes after her mother, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the landlord, gruffly.

Bertrand left the bar, crossed over to a table by the wall and sat down. On the wall by the table hung a looking-glass. Bertrand glanced into it. It reflected back his bronzed features.

"Eighteen years have made a difference in my face, but then I am bronzed by the sun; and riding for four years, too, in the Confederate service, hasn't made me look any younger," he murmured to himself, reflectively.

Then again he glanced into the glass, which reflected the room back of him.

"What was the meaning of the terror in her face at the sight of me?" He put the question to himself, absently, for his thoughts were wandering far away.

"Can it be her child? If so, then she is mine, too; but, if she be eighteen, she is too old; my daughter would be scarce sixteen. Pahaw! What a fool I am!" he cried, suddenly. "My girl had large, gray eyes, while the eyes of this one are like the eyes of Mildred; the eyes of an angel, but they can also sparkle with demon light."

The return of the girl with a glass of ale put a stop to Bertrand's reflections. He watched her narrowly when she placed the ale on the table before him. She did not appear to heed his searching glance.

After placing the ale on the table, she returned to the bar.

On Bertrand's face was a puzzled look.

The features of the girl were pale as death.

Bertrand sipped his ale slowly; he could not understand this riddle. Suddenly his ear, trained to acuteness on the prairie, heard a light footstep near him; he glanced into the glass which reflected the room behind him.

Even his iron heart gave a sudden leap, for in the glass he saw the girl standing behind his chair. A keen-edged bowie-knife glittered in her hand, which was raised to strike him in the back.

(To be continued.)

\$50,000 Reward:

OR, THE ROMANCE OF A RUBY RING.

A PHILADELPHIA HISTORY AND MYSTERY.

BY WM. MASON TURNER, M. D.,
AUTHOR OF "MARKED MINER," "UNDER HAIL," ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNDER LOCK AND KEY.

We will return a short while, in the running time of our story, to bring before the reader the many events which have crowded upon us.

It will be remembered that early this same evening, we left Lady Maud on a dark, mysterious errand, standing startled and frightened, in the snow-covered yard beside an old well, as she suddenly heard the bell ring loudly in the hall.

Recollecting this it will not be difficult to follow the thread of the story on, and see what followed.

The woman stood still for a moment and glanced wildly around her. She seemed to be undecided what to do. She trembled—partly with cold, partly with fear—and still stirred not.

Again, however, the bell jingled—this time louder than before, as if he who pulled it was impatient.

But the Lady Maud moved not a muscle. After a short interval the bell sounded again with a terrific clangor.

"Perdition seize the man!" muttered the woman, between her teeth, as a malicious oath broke from her lips. "It is he! and I can not say nay! I must let him in, or—there'll be trouble. Ha! confound him! again!"

She waited no longer; for the bell had now rung for the fourth time. She stooped suddenly, and, with a vigorous effort, hauled back the boards over the mouth of the well, shutting out from human gaze the black secret within.

Then drawing the slide over the light, she cast the lantern aside, hurried into the hall, closed the door, and then stood still for a moment. In an instant she had collected herself, and casting aside the covering which she had flung over her shoulders, she hastened down the passage to the front door.

The bell-wire was again creaking as she placed her hand upon the knob. In a moment the bar was removed, the door unlocked; then it was opened, though the check-chain was in its place.

A man outside impatiently attempted to push in, but the chain held the door firmly. He desisted, and, turning to another man, a

perfect Hercules in stature, who stood at the bottom of the steps, he said:

"Now, hurry Tom, I'll meet you at the 'Spades,' in Juniper street. Expect me."

The man Tom waited no longer, but strode off at once up the street, and was soon out of sight.

The other again approached the door.

"Now let me in, Lady Maud!" he exclaimed, in a low, hoarse voice. "I'm half frozen!"

Then the door was opened and the man entered.

"Why the deuce did you not answer the bell sooner?" he asked, roughly, as soon as the door was well closed; and he glanced threateningly at the woman.

"Why—why, captain, I didn't hear you at first—I—I—was asleep," replied the other.

"Asleep! Why, my dear Lady Maud, you surely forget the hour! 'Tis only—ha!" he exclaimed, as just then the light flashed accidentally in the woman's face, showing the pale and haggard features. "You have lied, Lady Maud! You have not been asleep—you have been looking down the well again! Hark you, my friend, you must stop that interesting pastime; you might get talkative."

The woman made no reply at once; but then, after a moment's hesitation, she answered, humbly:

"I could not help it, Willis! Something seemed to impel me to look—to look at it—and I went! . . . 'Tis—'tis there now! Oh, God!"

The man himself shuddered as Lady Maud uttered the last words in a low, frightened whisper, but he made no reply.

In a moment the two had disappeared in the parlor, closing the door.

*** * * * We dare say that by this time the reader is anxious to learn something of poor Sadie Sayton. Save indirectly, we have not referred to her for some time.

When last the reader saw her, she was being borne helpless and unresisting up stairs, by Wildern and the Lady Maud. Since then we have told nothing of her.

We will now return to the poor girl, the victim of such a peculiar concatenation of devilish—that is a good word—circumstances.

Those who bore her unconscious form between them, paused not until they reached the landing at the top of the second flight of stairs. Here they stopped a moment for breath. But in a moment more they hurried on again, this time turning sharply to the left, and going down a dim-lit passage-way.

Then they halted before a door. The woman, inserting her hand in her bosom, drew out a key, and quickly unlocked the door.

The two at once entered a magnificently furnished room, and placed the senseless form of the poor girl upon a bed. They then lowered the gas, which was burning in the soft-tinted, rose-colored globes. They then unbound the slender wrists, and loosening the handkerchief which was over her head, silently withdrew from the room, and locked the door behind them.

An hour passed—then another. And all this time the unfortunate girl had remained motionless, and, it seemed, scarcely breathing. But at last a quick, flitting shiver passed over her frame; by a sudden movement she sat up on her elbow, and then, with a low cry, she tore the handkerchief from her head, and gazed around her.

At first she could not realize her position; she only remembered seeing a strange girl lying in a tall man's arms, and her subsequent swooning in the snow.

She sprang from the bed, as suddenly her soul was filled with horror, and rushed to the door. It was locked! Then she glanced around her like a tigress.

There were no windows to the room—no outlet save the door now locked.

A horrible suspicion flashed over the poor girl; her eyes seemed to start from her head. She glanced at her hand. The much-prized ring was absent still! Then the whole evening, with its list of startling events, rushed over her like an avalanche.

Again she tried the door, but it yielded not. Then she raised her voice in a long, wild shriek. But no answer came back to her. She heard cautious steps outside; but they passed by the door and then paused.

And then, with despair in her heart, and gloom in her soul, the girl—a prisoner!—trottered back and fell fainting upon the bed.

CHAPTER XIX.

SADIE'S DREAM.

From a swoon Sadie Sayton passed gradually and, to herself, imperceptibly into a deep, almost dreamless slumber. We say 'almost,' for it was not until nearly day that a vision passed over her brain.

A fearful vision it was.

Sadie dreamed that she was floating in air over a wild, dark sea. No light in the atmosphere above, no light on the sea below. A terrible silence hung over every thing, and as she hovered in the air, endeavoring to keep herself buoyed up, she could hear nothing but the labored breath coming from her own bosom, and the ceaseless flapping of her wings.

But, despite her efforts, she gradually sunk lower and lower! And then she could dimly see the waters of the glancing, dingy pool, and could hear a weary, dismal sighing

and groaning coming up from the dark lake, like the wailings of lost souls.

Desperately she fanned the quiet, sultry air with her wings, endeavoring to soar higher and to speed away from the awe-inspiring place. But her efforts were vain. She sunk lower and lower; and then a terrible mephitic odor arose from the lake, and filled her nostrils with an undefinable stench.

A deadening, swooning sensation took possession of her; her wings commenced to grow weary, and her laboring breath came and went with a fearful rapidity.

And now her wings touched the surface of the dark tarn. Then a mighty shudder thrilled her frame as from the shock of a heavily-charged battery; and again with her wings she beat the dead-like air, in a mad endeavor to rise above the pool. But her wings sunk lower in the shiny waters; and now her feet were in the cold flood!

Just then, two dark-winged figures, terrible to look upon—too terrible to describe—darted upon her. As they passed along, just skimming over the pool, they each gave her a downward push, and then glanced on.

Like lead she sunk in the chilling waters—her limbs benumbed and helpless, her wings collapsed and drooping.

Down! Down!

The black waters groaned in her ears, and unseen spirits of evil beneath the black waters of the lake were clutching her now in their slimy grasp, and dragging her down slowly—slowly.

Oh, fearful moment! Oh, worse than death!

But just then the leaden gloom above was illumined, as with the brightness of a shining moon, and a white-winged angel appeared, hovering just above her.

Sadie looked, and, with a transport of joy pervading her frame, she beheld in the angel the noble face and form of one so dear to heart! Sorrowfully he gazed at her for a moment, and then folding the long, sweeping wings about him, preparatory to a swoop, he smiled lovingly upon her.

Then, in the twinkling of an eye, the two black-winged forms, which before had flitted by, arose from the surface of the lake, and dashed upon the white angel. They met with a resounding shock.

The air was filled with the loud, angry beating of wings, and a terrible conflict was inaugurated.

Still Sadie was sinking; and the cold, black waters broke against her neck, and washed overhead.

And then, like the shifting of a panorama, the air grew brilliant and dazzling, as if lit by the splendor of the mid-day sun; and then—

But, with a sudden start, Sadie awoke.

She had felt a cool hand pressing her hot brow, and had heard low words sounding faintly on her ear. She opened her eyes and looked around her.

A faint light was burning in the room, and the girl had just time to catch sight of a female figure disappearing through the door. Then the door was closed with a sudden snap, and the key grated in the lock. Sadie was again a prisoner.

The poor girl raised herself and glanced around her. She felt invigorated and refreshed, despite the terrible dream which had just agonized her bosom. For a moment she could not tell where she was. She rubbed her temples and gazed around her.

On the hearth was a round patch of brilliant light, shimmering down through the chimney. And the streets without were noisy with the rumble of jolting cars.

Sadie thus knew that the dark night had passed, and that day had come again to gladden the earth. She slowly arose from the bed and tottered to a chair.

We shall not pause to give the varying emotions which flashed in quick succession through the bosom of the girl. She had a deep and well-grounded suspicion as to the motive prompting her close confinement, especially in such a richly-furnished room. Sadie knew the wickedness of the great city in which she was temporarily stopping; perhaps her notions of the dark crimes in Philadelphia were exaggerated.

So there was but little doubt in the girl's mind as to the occasion of her imprisonment; yet she was mystified and confused. And then, at last, she burst into a flood of tears.

Nor did these tears, as is generally the case, give relief. Her fears were of great magnitude, and she had too much at stake for a flood of tears to wash fear and doubts all away.

She thought, too, of Fanny—of the perturbation and terror of that poor girl—of her loneliness, and incapacity to take care of herself in this large city, and she groaned in spirit.

And there she sat!

An hour went by; and then the door was softly opened, and a large tray, containing a substantial breakfast, was shoved into the room.

Sadie sprang to her feet and glanced around. She saw nothing, however, but a hand, which suddenly disappeared.

In a moment the girl was by the door, her hand wrenching at the bolt. But the door was already locked!

With a stifled cry, the maiden reeled back to a chair.

The hours passed by, and the day wore itself away; and the poor girl saw nothing of the bright, glorious weather without, save the small, shifting spot of daylight glimmering down the chimney flue; and she

heard nothing, save the jolting cars, and the deadened rattle of the lumbering drays, wagons and carriages.

About mid-day, as near as the maiden could judge, the door was again opened, and another tray containing food was half-way protruded; but as he or she who held it saw the contents of the other still untouched, the tray was withdrawn, and the door again closed and locked.

This time Sadie paid no heed to the opening and shutting of the door; for she was thinking of her fearful dream—of Allan Hill—of him, too, who had played Hawkshaw—of the tall, bearded, impertinent stranger at the theater—of the sight she had seen through the curtainless window of the old house, and a black cloud of despair was settling over her soul.

Then the glimmer of daylight in the hearth faded slowly; then it was entirely gone.

Sadie gazed fondly at the spot it had occupied, and as it vanished she heaved a deep sigh. She missed that small patch of sunlight—rather daylight—as she would a friend; for it had been her friend—the only link between her and the outside world.

The day was drawing to a close, and the long winter night, with its cold winds and dark shadows, was at hand.

Sadie shuddered at the thought what that night might bring forth!

And then at last she arose from her chair, and began to walk the room with a nervous, faltering step; and as she walked, she murmured, faintly:

"Oh, God! Can it be he? That voice—that figure—that face! No one else has it. And—and—the diamond pin! And the ringing plaudits! Oh, it is he, and I have found him at last—found him but to lose him! And, alas, I've found another! That monstrous wretch! Heaven support me in this trying hour!" she almost shrieked, as she paused in her promenade, and sunk back into the chair again.

"I—I—feel faint and feverish!" she muttered; "and—and—I must eat. Yet I distrust it. But I can not bear this fearful tax upon me without food. God help me!"

As she spoke she arose and approached the tray, which had rested undisturbed since it was placed within the door that morning. She stooped down and, taking it up, carried it to a table. She partook sparingly of the food, and then she drew back, and again began her restless promenade up and down the room.

Again the black thoughts came to her mind—again the hideous dream flashed over her. She could not dislodge that dream. There it was, in her brain, clear, distinct, awful! It rose up constantly before her like a grim phantom—an irrepressible shade.

The rumbling in the streets had, to a great extent, died away, and nothing but an occasional jingle of the car bells echoed faintly in the quiet air of the room.

Fainting, sickened at heart, her heart throbbing with fever, Sadie Sayton tottered forward, and sunk with a groan upon the bed. At that moment the door was cautiously opened, and a female figure quickly entered. The woman looked the door at once.

Sadie sprang up, and with a wild cry—half of joy, half of appeal—for she thought the hour of deliverance had come, rushed forward and fell, in a suppliant attitude, at the feet of the imperious Lady Maud.

CHAPTER XX.

A PHYSICIAN NEEDED.

WHEN Willis Wildfern and the Lady Maud entered the parlor that night, the former, after drawing a chair close to the cheerful grate, and seating himself, turned at once, and said:

"That's a wondrous bad habit of yours, Lady Maud! You have a way of prying into matters which it were better to let rest; and he gazed at her sternly, as if by the frown on his brow to add force to his words.

By this time the woman had partly recovered from the shock she had recently experienced from the search in the well, and the sudden, and, at that moment, unexpected and unwished-for coming of Wildfern. So she replied, calmly:

"You are hard on me, Captain Willis. That old well contains more than one secret; and hark you, if it were searched and questioned it could tell more than one dark tale! Don't forget that, captain!" and she scowled venomously at him, as she seated herself on the opposite side of the grate.

Willis Wildfern started at first, and an angry cloud grew afresh upon his face; but as he paused for a moment, the cloud disappeared, and a deadly pallor shone even through the heavy beard upon his cheek.

"Pshaw, Lady Maud! You are quick to anger, indeed. What I spoke was more in the way of advice than anything else, and—"

"Then take your advice to yourself and profit by it!" retorted the woman, interrupting him. "Do you think I will slave myself to death for you, when my fingers at any moment can throttle you, and—"

"There! there! Lady Maud—enough of this! If I have offended you, why consider the provocation; and—and—I beg your pardon, that's all!" said the man hastily, and though a reddening gleam of anger darted to his face he smothered his emotions successfully.

"We must not quarrel, Lady Maud," he

continued more calmly; "and you and I know why. So let's be friends."

The woman paused, and then the frown gradually faded from her face, her brow unwrinkled, and she said:

"Very good, captain; I am willing. But be so kind as to keep a more civil tongue in your head. I am tired of hearing your constant complaints, and seeing a frown on your face whenever you come. I do my best to please you; I can do no more, nor shall I try."

Willis Wildfern made no reply to this. Then several moments passed in silence. But at length the Lady Maud, looking up, said:

"I have looked for you all day, captain; why have you failed to come?"

"The truth is, Lady Maud, I have had my hands full since I left here last evening. You know about the presses and the suspicions of Tom? Well, Tom and myself had a little affair down to Tony's, and the rest of the night we were packing. To-day we have been out at the vault fixing up, and to-night at one o'clock we move. Things are getting ticklish; but one of those meddling blue-coats got more than he bargained for, that's certain!" and Wildfern smiled very grimly as he spoke.

"What do you mean, captain?" asked the woman, eyeing him keenly; "any more blood—"

"Sh! Lady Maud! how soon you jump at conclusions. I meant simply that Tom's muscle was again triumphant. You know that he is brawny."

The woman half-shuddered as these words were spoken with a certain significance; but she made no reply.

Wildfern did not press the question; he simply bowed his head and smiled wickedly. But looking up suddenly he said:

"And while at the cemetery I saw a funeral, Lady Maud—a very plain one," and he looked at her.

The woman returned his glance, but did not reply; she was awaiting him to go on.

"If I am not wondrously mistaken, I know whose funeral it was," continued Wildfern. "I think the widow Hope is dead."

"The widow Hope! The mother of the girl you once pretended to love—now the pale-faced actress?"

"Pretended? Heed you, Lady Maud!" exclaimed the man, angrily, "I once loved Agnes Hope with my whole heart; but, let that pass! The old woman died last night about two o'clock. I looked into the death chamber from the street; and Tom tells me he clambered up on the shutter of the lower story, and saw every thing. The widow was buried to-day."

"Then the coast is clear for you, captain—the mark, you know. But, do you carry that purpose still? Have you no pity in your heart for the poor girl?"

"Pity? You amuse me, Lady Maud! In such a case as this I know not the meaning of the word! But—" he paused, and then continued: "that fellow Hayworth will be troublesome. He's inclined to meddle; let him look to himself if we come together!" and a dark frown wrinkled the man's bearded face.

"You had better shun this man, captain. I've met him. He looks dangerous."

"I'll watch him, and I am not afraid of him."

"You have Tom to help you, you know, captain," said the woman, with a spice of sarcasm.

The man winced, but did not reply. Several moments, then elapsed before either spoke; and when the silence was broken it was by the Lady Maud, who said, half-musingly:

"The girl's mother—now dead, you say—reminded me forcibly of a maiden once the belle of the city. She had some trouble with somebody. What the trouble, and who the somebody, I don't know; but the girl was disinherited—in fact, turned out of doors. But that is long, long ago, when I myself was—well, it matters not—'tis gone now!" and the woman ended her sentence very abruptly—very singularly.

To all this Wildfern made no reply; he seemed to be thinking. But then he aroused himself and said:

"Time is flying—I must not linger. You and I have work before us to-night—work in which you are interested, Lady Maud. But I must visit that girl. A professional visit if it can be arranged. If there is virtue in bad air—and I know the room where our plunder is kept—the fair creature needs a physician by this time. Go and learn, Lady Maud."

The woman started and gazed keenly at the man, but then she said:

"Yes, captain." "That was all she said, but there was a tone of significance in her manner. She then left the room."

A long time elapsed—how long Wildfern did not exactly know, for he had spent the time in thinking.

The man had been laying some very deep plans, and as he cogitated over them, more than once a frown came to his face. More than once, too, he had uttered an oath—always in connection with two names—names the reader has heard.

The truth is, Willis Wildfern had two friends (?) who were getting troublesome to him. He longed to be free to show it. His plans were to that end.

But then the Lady Maud returned, and

her face was sad, yet stern, when she said, in a low voice:

"The patient indeed needs a physician, captain; but, poor thing—"

"Enough, Lady Maud!" interrupted the man; "I'll go!"

"But, Wildfern, I trust you not! I—"

"Out of my way, woman! I have sworn I would win this obstinate girl for my wife. I'll do it! She has money—the genuine article!" As he spoke he pushed by her.

The woman half covered, and then stood to one side.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 25.)

Did She do Right?

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

THE late sunshine of that quietly beautiful September afternoon was glowing, like a golden red banner, all over the landscape, lighting in a gleaming glory the stately towers of Ellenwood, and shining a fair halo over the proud, beautiful head bowed so dejectedly just within a western window.

Wealth of tenderly brown hair were pushed away from the fair, sweet face; plait cheeks, on whose smooth perfectness were traces of tear crystals; a dimpled mouth, arched like a cupid's bow, all red and dewy; and large, darkly blue eyes, full of wistfulness.

She was pretty, this daughter of a high-born, high-bred family, whose dwelling, for a dozen generations, had been at Ellenwood, whose riches were fabulous, whose pride was a proverb.

And on that peaceful autumn afternoon, when the air was so full of soothing beauty, and as far as her eyes could see, she met glories of nature that were all her own, Vira D'Alembert's heart was crying out for a possession not her own—one that her very life was powerless to purchase her, unless—well, Vira D'Alembert would have given it for the knowledge that Ernest Monteith cared for her.

She loved him—yes, I think it was more than love, as we mean it generally. It was a passionate adoration—wrong, perhaps, yet honest, so far as she knew her own heart; and she, like all of us, thought she was fully cognizant of her own wants; yet, it was the only thing, ever since her life had begun, that she had wanted twice for.

This Ernest Monteith, whom not Vira D'Alembert alone had deified, was every way worthy her, or any woman; physically, intellectually, morally, he was higher than his fellows.

And those two, Vira D'Alembert, with her passionate, Southern blood, a birthright she could not remedy, and Ernest Monteith, cool, calm, grave to a sternness that women love, had crossed paths.

Sitting in the drifting, slanting sunlight, Vira was thinking of that, and wondering if her heart ever would cease aching—if her first, her last—for with such nature as hers, loves comes but once, and lasts through a time and an eternity—if that love would ever recompense her?

With a tender, loving caress, she opened a worn envelope that she had carried next her heart for long months, and a light sprang to her eyes as she re-read for the thousandth time, perhaps, the few brief, courteous, yet unmeaning words, so far as importance were attached to them.

"Your cordial note of invitation, dear Miss D'Alembert, was handed me a moment ago, and by the messenger I return my delighted thanks and a hearty acceptance. I will not fail to attend. Till then, adieu."

That was all—a simple acceptance of her invitation for him to join a party of friends at Ellenwood early in the spring.

He had come, he had gone; that was all. Yet hardly all; for he had left, all unwittingly, unrest after him, while he had gone on his way, never, perhaps, casting a thought after the gentle, womanly girl, unless it were a passing remembrance of her sweet face, her haunting eyes.

Vira wearily folded the precious note away again, and the momentary light faded from her eyes, and the floating shadows came again.

"Now, Aida, dress me for dinner—the white grenadine and pearls. It is so warm to-day."

A dusky maid glided from out the dim shadows, and deftly began to arrange Vira's beautiful hair.

An hour after, fair as an angel vision, the proud, silently suffering girl descended to her guests, her secret as fast locked between her lips as it had been for many a day.

And women envied her, and quoted her, and copied her matchless graces as far as they might; while men worshipped at a shrine already made sacred by the idol of whom none, even the idol himself, ever dreamed.

An artist's studio, with rich amber and scarlet, purple and golden tints in the dim, perfumed atmosphere—with dainty Hebes and flower-crowned Psyches gleaming in marble sculpture, or clear, fair tints of painting. Among it all, two men; in the air, the fragrance of fine cigars.

"Monteith, you've been to Ellenwood again, and returned. Now, did you find my words true? Does not Miss Vira love you?"

Le Roy Auten's voice was earnest, and

Ernest Monteith's eyes grew shaded with a pained expression.

"I have been, Auten, to Ellenwood; and I confess, secretly, I wish I had never gone. I could not but see; I tried, God knows, to disabuse her of the love she bears unworthy I. It hurt me, Le Roy, more than I can tell."

In a reverie of abstracted thought, he suffered his cigar to die out. Then he arose to go.

"She is so young, so pure and noble, Le Roy, I wish I were heart free. I'd—"

Auten sprang to his feet in a gesture of amaze.

"Ye gods of Olympian fame! Do you say you are in love, and not with Vira D'Alembert?"

"I say it; and when you learn the story, you will say it is as romantic a tale as your artist ears ever listened to. Will you hear it?"

He smiled at his friend's surprise.

"Will I hear? I am devouring with curiosity."

Monteith was leaning gracefully against the door.

"I saw her during my visit at Ellenwood; a shy, dainty little morsel, made to love and cherish as surely as lily buds are made to regale us with their fragrance. Sweet-lipped, gazelle-eyed, ebony-haired—there stands my fairy—whom I love in preference to Miss D'Alembert."

A regretful sigh accompanied her name.

"Then, to finish the tale, she is poor, refined, educated."

"Refined? educated? Of course, or I never could have loved her. Poor? not particularly, though it matters not."

"And she loves you?"

Auten asked the simple question earnestly. Monteith laughed.

"Really she has never yet told me; yet I think so; I hope so."

He was a man accustomed to having his wishes met half way; many persons would have been spoiled by it, but it made Ernest Monteith more grateful to his fellows.

"And now, who may she be?"

"In the answer lies the most painful part of the story. It is Irma Joy, Vira's cousin."

Ellenwood was ablaze with welcoming light on that sparkling Christmas night; and amid the evergreens and holly, Vira D'Alembert, dressed in festive robes, was awaiting her guests.

A light was in her eyes that had never been there in all her life before; a joyous glow was mantling her cheeks, and a blissful, almost ecstatic smile was on her sweet mouth.

"Irma," and she turned to the beautiful girl who was clasping a bracelet around her fair arm, "it is just eleven years to-night since you came to Ellenwood. Do you remember?"

Irma clasped her warm, white arms around Vira's neck.

"Can I ever forget, my cousin, my dear friend, my benefactress! But for your sweet charity, to-day where would I have been?"

Vira laughed softly.

"Oh, you must not make me such an angel, Irma, cherie. I am selfish, very, and your society has been very sweet to me."

A glad blush mantled Irma's cheeks.

"I'd give all the world if I might but repay Vira, darling Vira."

"Then, promise never to leave me; married, or as you are, never to go from Ellenwood. Our house is a castle for size."

"I'll promise a thousand times."

There was a flush on her cheeks as she spoke.

"Let me run down to the saloon now, Vira, and make my last grand round of inspection."

After she had gone, Vira took from her pocket a freshly-mailed letter; and the light in her eyes deepened in its intense happiness as she re-read it.

"Miss Vira," it said, "on Christmas night I beg the favor of an interview, which will affect my life. I will explain when we meet."

"It can have but one meaning. Ernest, Ernest, has the love for me come at last? It seems so many weary years since last April, when I began to love you!"

Two hours later, while the music was making its witching melody, Ernest Monteith and Vira D'Alembert were together in the deserted conservatory.

Her eyes were downcast, her cheeks flushed, as she sat on a low, mossy bank. Before her, grave and stern as ever, his arms folded, Ernest leaned against a trellis, where a luxuriant clematis twined.

"Miss D'Alembert, let me thank you for your kindness in granting this interview. Permit me to state my object at once, without detaining you further. It is love, Miss Vira, of which I shall speak, the first, the only love of my life, but which needs your approbation before I dare even speak it."

He was guarding his words as best he could, fearful lest he should cause her to misconstrue; and now his very soul sunk as he noted the delicious blush on her cheeks and the tumultuous heaving of her chest.

"Miss Vira," and the words came so tenderly—tender in pity, despite himself—that she looked up, great floods of glory beaming from her soul-lit eyes, "will you give Irma to me, Miss Vira?"

He spoke, oh, with such infinite sympathy, and dreading the effect of his words.

Like a sudden thunderbolt, the words fell on her senses; she raised her hand, in a trembling, uncertain sort of way, and then looked up at him with a wistful agony in her eyes. By degrees she seemed to comprehend his love was for another; her cheeks paled to the shade of her snowy dress; her lips quivered, and she bowed her head in utter despair.

Monteith laid his hand gently on her head. "Can you forgive this blow, Miss Vira? I could not avoid it."

His quiet, respectful tone proved his truth. Suddenly she raised her face—so changed he involuntarily recoiled from its dull paleness.

"Mr. Monteith, did you ask for Irma? Did you say you loved her—her?"

"I did, Miss Vira. May I have her?"

"And be my cousin—you be my cousin, Irma's husband! Oh, merciless fate, that I should see to-day!"

She walked away to the open window, where the frosty air blew keenly in. Directly she came back, the odor of the cold night in her garments, her eyes blazing like stars, her cheeks and lips red as roses.

"Have you spoken of love to her yet?"

She demanded the question in an imperious sort of way.

He replied, in his grave tone: "I have not. My duty was to you first."

She flung off the heavy hair from her heated face.

"Your duty to me, but your love to her! that child who can never understand what a priceless treasure your love is! Oh, Ernest Monteith, how could you pass me by, with the great passion in my heart for you?"

She clasped her hands in the anguish of the moment.

"Miss D'Alembert, sincerely I regret this; I beg of you forgive me for exciting any emotion I may have unwittingly done. If I have caused you pain, believe me, I never meant it."

"I know it, oh, I know it! And yet I love you so—Ernest, I love you so!"

Her tears were flowing, and her slight frame trembled with excess of grief.

For a moment Ernest remained; then, bending over her, touched his lips to her sun-bright hair, and left her alone.

"Irma, darling, you'll be my own!" Ernest Monteith was bending over the fair child woman, who, with averted eyes and pale cheeks, had heard his passionate declaration.

"Look up, sweet one; I have not seen those dear eyes yet—look at me, Irma!"

By gentle force he raised her face, and then sprang back in surprise.

Tears were there; large, hot tears that were dropping from her sad eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Monteith, can't you care for Vira, darling Vira? She is so noble, so proud, and her heart is breaking for you. Oh, please love Vira!"

"Then, you don't love me, Irma, or you'd never plead so for another. Do you?"

A fierce pang at his heart told him the truth.

"I don't love you, Mr. Monteith, as a woman ought to love the man she will marry."

Her sweet, proud manner left him no room to find aught of fault; with a dead pain in his soul he turned wearily away.

The Christmas greens had been gathered a half-score of times, and at Ellenwood, on a bright skied day, the family—larger than ten years before—were gathered in the grand old saloon.

Irma—no longer the budding girl, but the dignified matron, whose husband loved her as had Ernest Monteith before him; whose bright-eyed boy clung to "auntie Vira's" velvet robes—was there, and Vira, too, proud as ever, beautifully regal in her mature womanhood, whom thirty-three years had touched so magically.

The dusk was gathering, and Miss D'Alembert quietly left the pleasant family circle, and retired to the conservatory, a place sacred to her since the night, ten years ago, when she saw Ernest Monteith for the last time.

Like a waking dream, that love had followed her; and to-night, as she bowed over the same clematis where his haughty head had rested, her heart went out in the old-time cry.

But a sudden kiss, warm and fervent, burned on her head; strong arms held her as in a deathless grasp, and eyes, whose look had naught but truest love in their clear depths, were passionately reading her own.

"I am come at last, Vira, my darling, my own, my only one. Am I welcome?"

Ernest Monteith held her tightly in his arms, marveling at the glory in her face.

"Ernest—my Ernest! Yours then—yours forever!"

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LITTLE PIERCE OF STRATEGY; SAVED BY

WOLVES; BOON HALLADAY; THE SPIRIT OF

THE FOREST; AFTER MANY DAYS; CARL RUT-

GER, etc.

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NIGHT; DEAR LIESE; ARTHUR'S GHOST; THE

DOUBLE CHIME; NEVER, OH, NEVER; WAIT

FOR ME, LASSIE; SIXTY AND SEVEN; WHAT

DID I WANT; THE MERCHANT'S FATE; TEN

YEARS AGO; BY THE DIM NIGHT-LAMP; etc.,

etc.

Poems, BLUE EYED MABEL and BLIND

MOTHER, not acceptable. Author requests return,

but no stamps. Sketch, HOW LONG GEORGES,

etc., by same author, not available. Written

on foolscap, both sides—against all rules for

good copy. No stamps. Essay, CHARITY, by

Bruno, we can not find room for. Poem, THE

CHALLENGER, is short as a fashionable sales-

woman's response to a civil question—hence will

find a corner. J. G. LA ROE, JR.'S, MS., CON-

CRIT, was not preserved. His MS., ONLY AN

OLD MAID, is returned. Poem, REGRET, we

return, having an overstock. Will try and find

place for poem, WOMAN'S RIGHTS. Sketch,

VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES, is not just what we

require, and hence we return the same. Sketch,

THEY ALL WILL DO SO, is well timed as to

moral, but is too imperfect as a MS. for use.

No stamps. Whimsy and mad place for poem,

HEART AND HAND, C. H. LUCAS, JR., of Dan-

ville, Ky., remits us poem, MINE ONLY. As

he is not the author, and as it is already a fam-

iliar one with readers of poetry, we shall fail to

"forward whatever it is worth" to Mr. Lucas.

Poem, OUT IN THE STORMY NIGHT, is not up to

standard, and is not available. No stamps.

Parties writing to us in reference to MSS.

sent us, must not take it for granted that we

will remember all about the same, but must

let each letter be a full explanation, in itself,

of what is canvassed or referred to. We have

before us two letters talking of "my story sent

you," etc. What story—when was it sent—

were stamps sent for its return, etc., etc. Be

explicit, for we can not remember the minute

details of each day's mail.

Foolscap Papers.

Another Wonderful Discovery.

Much that has been pure conjecture has been said regarding the primeval inhabitants of this country, but I am prepared to throw a little light on the question, which will interest the enlightened world, and the honor of discovering it was merely by a happy accident.

The other day, while wandering in a ravine among the Adirondacks, a shower of rain came up which sent me post-haste into a small cave in the rock. In a few minutes, my eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, I began to look about me with

the fear of finding snakes, when I discovered what bore evidence of being a pair of shoes of very ancient pattern, and looking very much as if they had been worn ages before they had finally been left there. Their size was enormous, and if the man carried out the idea of the shoes, he must have been about fourteen and a half feet in height. Such a discovery opened my eyes still wider, and I proceeded to look for the skeleton, when I encountered a peculiar jug-shaped vessel, in the north corner of the cave, that seemed to be made of stone or stoneware. Taking it to the light, I found the following legend, in an unknown tongue and hand:

MO. NON. GA. HE. LA. I could make out the figures, which evidently meant 1860 B. C., as its appearance went to show, but the words, which seemed to be abbreviations, I could do nothing with. Removing the stopper, there was in it about a quart of very strong fluid, but quite palatable, and altogether unlike the fluids of the present time. My taste, running after every thing in the jug for any later tests. There were some remains of burnt faggots on the floor, and a few ashes, which were sure proofs that the ancients were acquainted with the properties of fire. Standing thus in the presence of four thousand years, no wonder I was filled with emotion. Proceeding further in search of the skeleton, I came upon a mere handful of small tablets, resembling pasteboard, and very old, with pictures on some, and on some curious hieroglyphics. The pictures were very rudely done, but had been once very highly colored. There was the representation of a king, I suppose, in a very obsolete costume; on his head something which looked like a crown, and in his hand something faintly resembling a scepter. On another was a picture of what I took to be the queen, very imperfect in delineation. Besides, there were various other portraits well worth historical study. Many of the tablets were inscribed with red and black characters which have puzzled various other learned men besides myself. These I brought with me for inspection.

Pursuing my search, so auspiciously begun, I found what I would have taken for a covering for a head, if it had not looked so outlandish. The brim was of great expansion, and very, very old and slouchy. The hat, if such it was, was of very large caliber, and seemed to be a companion-piece to the shoes. On the walls were scratched very strange words which could not translate; some of them done into modern English read "JOHANNES, BROUENNE," etc. Can any one solve them?

But, perhaps the most remarkable object that I found, was what seemed to have been a letter, torn in four pieces, and wedged in a chink, where it had lain for four thousand years! The marks were still legible with which it was covered, and looked very much like the Chinese alphabet in a hall storm, or like it had been inspired by Horace Greeley. Being versed in many sick and dead languages, I finally got the substance of the letter, which was this:

"DEAR OLD CHUM: (chum, chum, that's Chinese.) Here we are out of scads. (Scads, that's Scandinavian.) We lost the last nickel (that sounds Dutch), and haven't anything to get home with. (By the way, I found a nickel coin, which must be the one spoken of.) Couldn't you borrow some rhino (decidedly Teutonic) and send to us? We had some of the rhino lately, as we had the good luck to meet some travelers who threw their pocket-books at us and took to their heels. They evidently considered us brimfuls."

"P. S. One of my chums has just come in with a full pocket-book, obtained in the above way, so I'll tear this note up, and don't trouble yourself by any means."

But I failed to find the skeleton of anybody—no bones at all, except a few, which, if there had been hen roosts in those days, I should have taken for chickens. I also brought away an old pipe, very old and strong, made of clay, which I am very willing to have inspected. I forbear comment. That I have opened a mine for investigation nobody will dispute, and I can't help feeling proud.

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN.

P. S. Since writing the above I beg to contradict, with emphasis, the statement that is just getting abroad, to the effect that the cave was inhabited for several months this summer by some artists, and that those things discovered appertain to them. The lie is as malicious as it is mean, and as false as it is fabulous, and I protest against it! Artists!—artists never leave any thing in a jug!

FASHIONABLE FIBS.

All truths must not be told at all times.

Now, please don't throw this article aside and call me an awful sinner, or say that I am inculcating the practice of lying into the heads of the readers of this paper, because I'm not. I know what I'm writing about, although I don't believe in my text myself. Just think a moment: Mrs. Z., didn't you see me coming down the avenue yesterday, and when I rung your door-bell didn't you tell the girl Annie to say you were "not at home"? And when Annie, in her simplicity, asked you if that wasn't a fib, didn't you remark that "all truths should not be told at all times"?

A trifling thing to make so much fuss about," you say. I tell you, honestly, that it is no such trifling thing. It's serious. It's bad enough to lie ourselves, without

making our servants tell fibs for us. Annie can't think you can do wrong, as you read your Bible, go regularly to church, and attend all the sewing-circles, and yet, if Annie grows to be an incorrigible falsehood teller, who's to blame?

There are thousands who hate falsehood yet think naught of this fashionable fib of "not at home."

When I came to the dignity of going to a man's school, the kind old pedagogue used to severely reprimand us—I mean the scholars—for fibbing, often delivering long orations on the enormity of the sin. In the course of this he would ramble off and say that if there was one thing in the world he detested it was to have visitors call in school hours. Perhaps (the next moment one of the parents of a scholar would open the door, and our teacher, ushering him in with the blandest of smiles, would say: "I am so glad to see you, Mr. X., you couldn't have called at a better time. Your son (who, by the way, was the dullest in the class) improves wonderfully."

If you had accused Mr. Pedagogue of having told falsehoods, the simple soul wouldn't have believed you, and yet he had done so, hadn't he?

What a sight of poor actors there are sprinkled over this world of yours and mine who are constantly worrying managers for engagements, and who receive for a reply: "The manager regrets that his company is already full." Two fibs in nine words, for he hasn't the slightest regret and his company isn't full.

Try to borrow money of a friend, and you will ever find that friend short of funds, even if his pocket-book be as full as it can hold.

Some editors will say, "no room for more paid contributors," at the very moment they are negotiating with new authors! The naughty, naughty fellows!

Authors used to end their stories with the monotonous "they were married and lived happily ever afterward." When days of perfection come around then will people live happily ever after marriage, but not till then.

How terrible it would sound to hear the following: "Mrs. Z., I'm sure I don't want to see you to-day, Eve!"

Pedagogue. (Why will you come and interrupt me in my school hours? You couldn't come at a worse time.)

Manager. I don't want such a stick as you are in my company.

Editor. You are not worth ten cents a column.

Author. Save occasional outbreaks of temper they passed a comparatively happy married life.

These would be truths—unpalatable, I grant you, and far from sounding pleasantly on the ear, and yet to Eve Lawless they sound better than lying. If every one who swayed from the line of truthfulness were to be served in the same manner as the male and female in the Good Book, there'd be precious few people left on this globe!

What's the use of certain editors making out the circulation of their papers some thousands more than it really is? I don't read a paper to see how many people take it. I get it to read its contents.

There are a great many walking, moving fibs all about us. There are people padding to make themselves look corpulent; corpulent people lacing themselves tightly in order to appear thin. Why can't human beings be content with the forms God gave them? Then, there are those married couples appearing in company to be perfectly happy, and yet, when they are alone together, almost cursing the hour they ever met. How much happier he thinks he would be if he had only married the pretty bookbinder, and how her happiness would have been complete had she linked her fate with the worthy mechanic!

But, fashion would have frowned on such things, and in some peoples' estimation fashion is more acceptable than love; so they go through the world acting a lie. The fact is, there are more consummate actors off the stage than on it; but yet, unlike the stage they hold up no moral.

Talking of the stage, it is extremely fashionable among the "Pecksniffs" to run down the theater, the theatrical profession generally, but, thank goodness, they can't hurt it. I'm not going to say the "actor folks" are, every one, good, honest and virtuous; nor can you say that of any profession; but, I am going to say you'll find Christians among them, even if they don't beset you at all times and all places with a tract.

[There, the manager of every theater in the country ought to give me a free pass to his establishment.]

What's the use, Mr. Parson, of having for your text, "Charity," and then abusing the poor player? Don't he need to have charity? I am sure if I wanted to go to the theater I'd go openly, and not hire a private box and peep through the curtains as some people do—ministers as well as laymen.

There's about the most ridiculous piece of nonsense going the rounds of the papers about the ill effects of "reading popular novels." Now, I'll tell you where the laugh comes in. These same papers publish items that have worse elements than ever entered into a novel. For shame, Mr. Mock Piety, to say we shall ever be consigned to eternal torments if we have a loving for Dickens—you, who eagerly devour the latest accounts of a divorce case with all the disgusting "suppressed evidence!"

I feel better for writing this, for I can see my own errors more clearly. I will remember remarking to Miss Stale that she looked the personification of health, and she had the color of the rose, when everybody knows she's got a countenance more like a wilted cabbage. But, that's only a fashionable fib; so, never you mind! I'm afraid to ask your opinion of this article, lest you should remark that the person most hit is

EVE LAWLESS.

WHAT SHALL WE HAVE FOR DINNER?

"My dear," says Mrs. Fretall, "what would you prefer for dinner?"

"Oh, any thing you like," replies her husband, quickly drawing on his coat. "I've told you before that I don't want to be always bothered about such things."

Mrs. Fretall puts on an injured expression of desperate resignation, and vainly endeavors to call up something palatable.

Dinner time arrives, and with it Mr. Fretall from his work. He sniffs the air on coming in, and an expression of disgust falls upon his face as he exclaims:

"What, fried beefsteak again! This is the fourth time in one week!"

"What am I to get?" cries his wife, almost distracted.

"Oh, get—," says her husband, and savagely finishes the sentence on the meat.

How often such scenes occur in households, where, with a little effort, peace might reign supreme, and no jarring words mar the happiness of a whole day—perhaps a whole lifetime. As insignificant matters have done it before. In a workman's family, where a woman has but a limited income to maintain a household upon, she may not be able to adorn her board with fine joints and rich desserts, yet that is no reason why her table may not be varied and wholesome as well as economical.

This is not going to be done by innate questions of a hot morning, or by going out to the market with a vague idea of getting something, though they don't know what.

Now, I propose this: let the mistress of a family acquaint herself with the different preparations of food that its members prefer, and write them all down in a bill of fare. Then, whenever she is at a loss to know what to get, instead of asking so distractedly, "What shall we have for dinner?" let her consult her list, and something will present itself that has not appeared on the table for several days at least.

Should the majority of her little community prefer fish, beef, pork, mutton, or any thing else, that one article might appear in different forms of cookery, two or three times a week: roast, boiled, fried, broiled, or even rare, so long as you are happy. The other articles of food would make up the remainder of the week, and then, when the whole list has been gone through, perhaps you will have something new to add to it, and if not, why, in the name of good temper and pleasant sociability, begin over again.

THE ART OF COURTING.

GENTLEMEN: Love is a great power—I might say an immense power. How many horse-power it is I can't say. A good many people, gentlemen, have curious ideas about courtship. Love is not necessary to courtship—a girl is. The prettier the better. Any man, gentlemen, can conquer any woman. Gentlemen, this is not bombast. I speak from experience—real, tried and true. I've had eight wives, gentlemen, and I hope to have a ninth.

Gentlemen, I bring the subject down to the day of proposal. On that day you will put on a pair of pants—that are not tight; you must not be, either. Neerer propose in tight pants. They are liable to give way under excitement.

You will begin speaking on—any thing. Look at the ground, then at her, you know. Then, turn your eyes away—another look, etc. When you have arrived at this point of the conversation, you will take out your pocket-handkerchief and don't blow your nose, but spread it at her feet and carefully kneel on it. This is much better, gentlemen, than running any risk of soiling your pants.

You will then, gentlemen, say a good deal, which, if you marry, a year afterward you will swear you never could have said.

Impossible! I can't say that. If she says Yes, the worse for you. If she says No, don't propose to do any thing desperate. It is foolish. In the first place no sensible girl will ever believe you. Secondly, it won't do you any good. Third, she may tell you to do so. Fourthly, the Morgue is full of fools.

If she says No, gentlemen, rise and say: "She loves me and says the contrary!" Then clasp her round the waist and kiss her; once, twice and repeat, "I love you."

Of course she will resist, but that will make the kiss all the sweeter. Nothing is good unless bought with hard labor. If, after you have kissed her, she screams and says: "No! she won't have you!" smile sweetly and say: "She can't have you! You always thought her figure was her own; you now see you were mistaken!"

Then scoot, get clear! You've had your revenge! Don't wait to lose your eyes. Gentlemen, this is all. It is not mere bombast I have spoken—I speak the words of sobriety and veracity—from experience, gentlemen; for I've had eight wives, and hope to have a ninth.

W. A. S. P.

EYES OF BLUE.

BY A. W. BELLAW.

Sweet eyes of blue, that are so winsome-wise,
When did you take a peep at Paradise?
Somewhere you've caught its covenant of light,
Wild, wonderful blue eyes.

In some far-off we dream of, such eyes grow
In fairy lands, where first the violets blow;
And well it is that you will smile at me,
Blue eyes, I love you so.

Oh, eyes of blue, that ope so wild and wide,
Why are you scared since I have told my pride?
Mad eyes of blue, forgive me with one smile,
And I'll die satisfied.

City Life Sketches.

LULU.

The Actress.

BY AGILE PENNE.

I HAD just returned from my summer tour, and was leisurely strolling down Broadway, when, right in front of the Metropolitan, I met an old acquaintance, by name Morris Ruth.

Ruth and I had been very intimate in days gone by, and I was heartily glad to take him by the hand.

Morris was one of those lucky fellows who are born with a silver spoon in their mouths, as the saying is. But Ruth's spoon must have been pure gold. Fortune was continually showering her brightest smiles upon him.

The only son of a wealthy father, he had at his command almost unlimited resources. Scarcely had he reached man's estate, when he went into business on his own account, and, at the time at which I write—some years only after that event—he was looked upon by his brother brokers as possessing one of the clearest and coolest heads ever seen in Wall street.

In person Ruth was a tall, good-looking fellow, with dark-brown hair and eyes. Social and generous in his nature, he was a general favorite.

The usual greetings were exchanged between us, and I took up a position by his side on the steps of the Metropolitan, and watched the ever-moving throng that flowed and ebbed, like a great human tide, up and down Broadway.

We had scarcely taken up our position when my attention was drawn to a lady coming up the street.

She was a young girl, about seventeen or eighteen, apparently. Her face was the prettiest one that I had seen for many a long day. Jet-black hair rippled back from a low, white forehead; the large, lustrous, black eyes, full of life and fire, were perfect in their beauty; the pouting lips, red as the carnation flower; the exquisitely formed chin, wherein a charming dimple hid itself coyly from sight—would have entranced the artist-soul of the painter. In person she was a little below the medium height. Her figure was perfect in its outline, and she walked with the easy, graceful step that is so hard to describe, but is so easy to see.

if possible, to make her acquaintance. So I haunted the back-door of the theater after the performance was over. I had an idea that when she came out and proceeded on her way homeward, she, seeing and of course recognizing me, would probably give me a chance to make her acquaintance.

"And did she?" I asked.

"Not a bit of it," he answered. "She walked by me as if I had been a post, and took no more notice of me than she did of the group of half-grown boys who lounged about the doorway waiting to see the performers come forth. Then I determined upon a desperate venture. I made the acquaintance of the back-door keeper of the theater—a good-natured old fellow—and imparted to him my wish to go upon the stage in the humble capacity of a supernumerary. The old fellow introduced me to the captain of that worthy band, and a five-dollar note quickly won him to my side. So that night I made my first appearance on any stage—as the playbills would have said—in a suit of armor four times too large for me. I was one of the king's guards. I tell you, Aggie, that was an eventful night for me. For nearly three hours I had the pleasure of being by the side of the girl whose glorious eyes had snared my heart as it was never snared before.

"Well, to make a long story short, I went on the stage regularly for about a month. Of course I was careful to disguise my identity, for fear that I might be recognized by some friend who might chance to be in the front of the house. In the month I managed to get acquainted with my charming, Lulu. I saved her from being crushed by a falling scene one night, and that led to the acquaintanceship. Then one stormy night, happening to have my umbrella with me, I offered to escort her home, and she accepted the offer. Of course on the way home—she lived about two miles from the theater, and all the way home I kept wishing that it was five—I contrived to get pretty well acquainted with her. She expressed surprise that I should go on the stage as a supernumerary, and I explained that I loved the drama.

"Well, the following Sunday I called upon her. That called to another and another, and at last I asked her to be my wife, and she consented. She is only a poor girl with a widowed mother, whom she supports out of her scanty salary."

"But, Morris, what will your folks say?" I asked.

Ruth laughed at the question.

"I told father yesterday, and he was awful indignant. Said that I had been entrapped by a scheming adventurer. By Jove!" he cried, suddenly, "there is the old gentleman now!"

Ruth was right, for his father and his confidential clerk, arm-in-arm, were passing just at that moment, deep in conversation.

"56 Bleeker!" said old Mr. Ruth, addressing his companion as he passed.

Morris started when the words fell upon his ears.

"That is where Lulu lives; can father be going there? I'm afraid that there is trouble ahead. Let us follow and see."

We followed the two to the house occupied by the plighted wife of Morris. When they entered the building, we, at a safe distance, followed.

We went quietly up stairs.

The door of the apartment occupied by Morris' lady-love was not shut tightly, so that we could plainly overhear all that passed within.

Lulu was alone—her mother having gone out—and had risen in astonishment at the entrance of her unexpected visitors. This, of course, we afterward learned.

"You are Miss Lulu Escott?" demanded old Mr. Ruth, in a tone that was far from being a pleasant one.

"Yes, sir," replied the girl, quietly, just the slightest trace of astonishment in her tone.

"I am Mr. Ruth, father of Morris!" It was clearly evident that the old gentleman expected that this announcement would paralyze the girl.

"Yes, sir, I am glad to see you," she replied, modestly.

"Glad to see me when you are trying to entrap my son into a marriage!" cried the old man, in a rage.

"Sir!" said the girl, indignantly.

"Oh, you needn't deny it! I know that it is the truth. You have made him so mad that he refuses to give you up," exclaimed the old gentleman, still in a passion. "Now, just listen to me. I know very well that you don't care any thing about my son; all you want is position and money. In order to save my boy from you, I'll give you one thousand dollars if you'll agree to leave New York and never see him again."

"Sir!" cried the girl, the tone indignant and clear as a silver bell.

"If one thousand isn't enough, say two, or even three. Just think! Three thousand dollars is a good sum of money."

"If you were to offer me three hundred thousand I would not break the word I gave to your son!" cried the girl, spiritedly. "I do not know whether your son is rich or poor. I have never questioned him. I promised to become his wife because I love him. I am an actress; you think me every thing that is bad, else you would not come here and insult me. I am an actress, but I am also a poor girl, working hard and honestly for my daily bread."

The old gentleman coughed in agitation. He was a gentleman, and he felt the truth of the girl's words.

"If you do not know any thing regarding my son's position," he stammered.

"I'll answer for that, father!" said Morris, opening the door wide and stepping into the room, to head off any more words.

The joy of the girl and the amazement of the father can easily be imagined.

Morris told his father all the facts in relation to the girl whom he had chosen, for his wife.

The old gentleman agreed that, if his son would wait three months, and his statement in regard to Lulu was true, he would consent to the marriage.

The three months passed; the old man kept his word, and to-day there is no happier wife in all New York than the girl who was once known as Lulu, the Actress.

There his worst suspicions were verified. He recognized the murdered man, but it was not his brother, and a bitter groan burst from his lips, as he thought that his loved brother was a murderer. A film gathered over his eyesight, and staggering, he sunk to the ground beside the corpse. He strove to stanch the life-stream, but in vain; the man was dead.

As this fact forced itself upon his mind, William arose and stood in deep thought. He reflected upon the course he ought to pursue. At first he intended to say nothing,

"Hattie, tell me, what has my brother James to do with it? Tell me; surely I have the right to know," and there was a sudden change in his voice, from a deep, mellow bass to a more harsh and metallic tone, telling how deeply the words and the motion had affected him.

"You have—you have," murmured the soft voice that formed one of Hattie Bowers' greatest attractions. "We—he loved me, and I accepted him; but I thought you knew, or I would have told you before, and spared all this."

For some time there was silence, Hattie furtively eyeing her rejected suitor through the tiny fingers, as he strode agitatedly to and fro, struggling to regain his composure. Then he paused before her and spoke:

"Well, little sister, let me congratulate you. James is a good boy and will make you a good husband; better, far, than his stern old brother, who was foolish enough to believe that he could win your love. Never mind; he sees his folly now, and Hattie—I may call you that now, as you're almost my sister—let us part friends. Let us forget all, save that I wish to be a true and sincere brother; can you trust me?"

"Oh, Mr.—William, I am so glad! I feared that you would be offended, and that I should lose a friendship that I value very highly. But you are so good, so noble; not like other men," and she frankly clasped the extended hand. "But may I tell—your brother? I have no secrets from him, now."

"Yes, it may be as well. But I must go. You will make my excuses at the house, please? I could not meet them now," and then he turned and strode swiftly away, following the path leading through the meadows, and thus to the village road, after passing through a short extent of woodland.

William Volney and his brother James were the only children of their widowed mother, and while yet young, the former had left home and sought his fortune in an eastern city. James had remained with his mother, living on and cultivating the old farm, but they would have been sorely pressed had it not been for the liberal remittances from William, who was now in a fair way to achieve a greatness at the bar. James was rather wild, as it was called in his native village, and far from being as steady as could have been wished; but all believed it to be the overflow of innocent spirits, and that as he grew older he would sober down.

The elder brother had returned on a visit, and had made, or rather renewed, the acquaintance of pretty Hattie Bowers, who for the first time in his life felt the subtle influence of love. For a time he fought against the temptation, but then one day, when James was at a neighboring town, he proposed, and as we have seen, was rejected, leaving thus for the first time, that James had won the coveted prize.

It was a hard blow, although he showed so few signs of it, outwardly, and he slowly wandered on, until reaching the woods, when he threw himself beneath an oak tree, and gave himself up to his thoughts. The night was clear and cool, but he did not feel it, and the bright, full moon slowly rolled along as the hours fled by.

Suddenly William roused with a start, and glanced at his watch. The hands indicated one o'clock, but still he did not rise, as the voices that had startled him from the reverie were drawing nearer, and he wished to let them pass, not caring to be seen, and shrinking from companionship. He listened intently, and a flush crossed his face as he thought he recognized the voice of his brother, in high and excited tones.

At some score yards distant the two men paused in the moon-lighted road. They appeared to have been drinking, and were greatly excited, more especially the one whom the watcher identified as his brother James.

Then, to his horror, he beheld the bright flash of a knife, that descended with a dull, heavy thud, clapped in the hand of James Volney. The other man fell backward with a wild yell, and there was a momentary struggle.

With a desperate effort William cast off the mental incubus that bound him, and sprang forward with a hoarse cry that alarmed the murderer. Snatching the fatal knife from the wound, he vanished in the wood, closely pursued by Volney; but the latter soon lost all trace of him, and returned to the road.

There his worst suspicions were verified. He recognized the murdered man, but it was not his brother, and a bitter groan burst from his lips, as he thought that his loved brother was a murderer. A film gathered over his eyesight, and staggering, he sunk to the ground beside the corpse. He strove to stanch the life-stream, but in vain; the man was dead.

As this fact forced itself upon his mind, William arose and stood in deep thought. He reflected upon the course he ought to pursue. At first he intended to say nothing,

do nothing, but let the tragedy be discovered by some other; but then he reflected that it would certainly be brought home to his unhappy brother, and then—he shuddered as he thought of the result.

How would his poor mother survive the shock of knowing that her son—the favorite—was a murderer? And then Hattie, his betrothed bride. It would be her death blow; and this thought determined him what to do. It was to take the burden of crime upon his own shoulders. There was no one who would feel the blow so deeply as his case, he had never been so loved as James, and of the two, he would be the least regretted.

It was a fearful sacrifice, but he determined to make it, and then strode swiftly along the road to the village, where the county judge resided. It was nearly dawn when he awoke the official, and coldly informed him of the murder, accusing himself as the perpetrator. Judge Montague could not comprehend it, and not until a messenger, dispatched to the spot, returned with confirmation, did he send for the proper officials, who lodged William Volney in prison.

The news ran through the village like wildfire, and a crowd was gathered around the jail, but no one was admitted, not even the mother or brother. It was with difficulty that the mob could be restrained from forcing the doors and lynching the prisoner, although the murdered man, Ralph Kingwood, was by no means popular. Still the atrocity of the crime, coupled with the fact that the cold, reserved lawyer was by no means a favorite, caused feeling to run high.

The inquest was held, and a verdict of wilful murder was brought in against William Volney. His hat, handkerchief, the latter stained with the victim's life-blood, were found upon the spot, and furnished evidence enough, even were it not that the crime had been admitted, to commit him for trial.

One visitor alone was admitted into the cell during the first week, Jerome Slack, a private detective, who closely questioned Volney, but the latter maintained a stubborn silence. But when Slack left, there was a half-smile playing around his thin lips, despite the frown that knit his brow.

The days rolled on and the time of trial drew near. Then the mother was admitted to visit her son. William turned away with a groan as he noted what a sad change had come over her in those few, short days. Pale and haggard, she looked ten years older

before the inquest, Jerome Slack had been upon the ground, and, more from habit than any thing else, he had made a close survey of the ground and corpse. Upon that day he had discovered two things. One was the first joint of a man's little finger, from the left hand; the other, a bloody imprint upon the shirt-bosom, thus showing that it belonged to the murderer.

After the inquest had been held—at which he made no mention of the finger, for reasons of his own—he made another discovery: that a person had left the spot at or near the time of the tragedy, and entered the woods. With true bloodhound instinct he took up this trail, and inch by inch, yard by yard, he traced it up for a good half-mile. Then he gave vent to a low whistle, and a cold, sardonic smile crossed his features as he passed beside a huge, gnarled tree.

Upon its bark was a crimson blotch—a bloody hand-print—close beside a hollow in the trunk. A careful scrutiny of the interior resulted as he had expected, and a bowie-knife was drawn forth from its place of concealment. This was closely examined, and Slack emitted a second whistle as he observed a name engraved upon the ivory haft. He felt that he had the actual murderer in his power, but one more test would make all sure.

Upon his visit to the prisoner he noted that his left hand was not mutilated. Then he paid the house of widow Volney a visit, and asked for James, who was indeed ill in bed.

Two days before the trial was to come off, James entered his brother's cell, who started back with a groan at his appearance, and motioned him wildly away. But James advanced and warmly clasped his hand, not heeding the cold shudder that agitated William's frame at the contact.

"William, brother, will you not speak to me? What have I done?"

"And you—you can ask me that? When but for you I should not—oh, my God!" groaned the prisoner, bitterly.

"I do not understand you, William," plying replied James. "But for me! Brother, I fear this dreadful event has turned your brain."

"Mad? No, I am not yet mad, but sometimes I think that these terrible thoughts will drive me so," exclaimed William. "It needed but this. I had hoped you would not come, but now you are here, listen; I will tell you all, and his voice resumed its old metallic ring.

"You were ever the favorite with mother,

for the voice. His is almost precisely like yours."

Well, the trial came off, but William Volney occupied the witness-box instead of the prisoner's, for he had frankly and unreservedly told his story to the magistrate and others; and it had been confirmed by Cope-land, who confessed the crime, but pleaded drunkenness in extenuation.

It seems that the two men had been drinking together, and had had a dispute over a game of cards, at L—, that was adjusted peaceably at the time. But upon their return home, it had been brought up, and culminated as we have seen. He was sentenced to imprisonment for life.

In due course of time James and Hattie were married, and the elder brother attended, but he soon after left the village for his eastern home, where, we believe, he yet resides.

The Banker's Ward:

OR,
The Shadowy Terror of Arrancourt.

BY GEO. S. KALME.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RECORD CLEARED.

We have passed lightly over Colonel Paul Rodney's war record, for history claims that, but no one who saw him enter Washington, at the head of his war-worn veterans, could doubt for a moment that he had seen "active service." Of the thousand men or more that went out with him, less than one-third returned!

He cast his eyes over the remnant of as brave a regiment as ever went into the field, and a feeling of sadness came over him. He, who had cared so little for life, had passed through all unscathed, while all around him, fathers, brothers, sons and husbands, had been cut down in the dread strife, carrying sorrow and distress to many a home. Who would have mourned for him? And now the survivors were going to meet the loved ones. Who would meet Paul, the hero, the loved commander? Who would welcome him?

"I feel lost," said he, to Henry Vinton, as they walked arm-in-arm to the hotel. "My men are all leaving me, and I have no one to care for but myself. Where shall I go? and what shall I do to make me forget my loneliness? I shall yet search for Meta, but the fear that I shall not find her almost deters me from the attempt."

Henry was pained by his utter sadness.

"Come with me, Paul," said he. "Come to Arrancourt. You will always find a welcome there as long as I live."

"Perhaps I will, Henry; but I must first go to Willhampton. You know why I left there? Ah! I was crazy then, but I can see through it all now. I must go back and see Charles Matthews, and good Mrs. Matthews. She seems like a mother to me; and I went away without a word to her."

Henry waited awhile, and then said:

"After that you will come?"

"Yes; thank you, Henry. I will come over for a few days."

Charles Matthews was sitting in his library, conversing with another gentleman, when Paul Rodney—or Colonel Rodney, for he was yet in military dress—was shown into the room.

The banker stared in surprise, and a stern look came over his face as he arose, and, with chilling courtesy, offered Paul a chair.

"To what am I indebted for this unexpected visit, Mr. Rodney?"

Paul was chilled by his coldness, but he replied, frankly:

"I can hardly tell you, unless I express it by the one word, hope."

"I am at a loss to know, Mr. Rodney, what you can hope for here," said the banker; for, at sight of Paul, all his bitterest feelings came back to him.

Paul sat a moment, hardly believing that it was Charles Matthews who spoke; then he arose, and without a word, stepped to the door.

"Colonel Rodney?"

It was the stranger, whom the banker had not introduced, that called to Paul. He had been gazing very steadily into Paul's face, as though it were a study for him.

Paul stopped with his hand on the latch.

"Do you recognize me, colonel?"

"Never, to my knowledge, have I ever seen you before," said Paul, after closely scanning his features.

"Neither have I ever seen you before," was the somewhat unexpected reply.

"What?" exclaimed the banker, starting from his chair. "You never saw him before?"

"Never in my life, my friend. There is a terrible mistake somewhere, but I think I can see through it."

"Good Lord!" gasped the banker, dropping into his chair, overcome by emotions that were a puzzle to Paul.

He stared from one to the other in questioning surprise.

"You are yet in the dark, Colonel Rodney," said the stranger, "and as I believe I am, at the present time, clearer-headed than our friend Matthews, I will try to explain. My name is William Montrose."

"Montrose?" exclaimed Paul, starting forward, for light was breaking through his bewilderment.

"I see that you remember the name, colonel. Mr. Matthews has been telling me of the strange affair following and connected with my settlement at the bank—you know I have but just returned from Europe—and I have been very innocently censuring this Paul Rodney, who proved so recreant to his trust. I now see my mistake and that of Mr. Matthews. You are not the gentleman with whom I transacted the business; but who it was that so maliciously used your name, I do not know. It was a cruel act, and I think if I had him now, I could teach him to impose upon me no more, the villain!"

Paul listened amazed; and the transition from overpowering misery to transcendent joy was more than he could bear calmly. He silently grasped the hand of Mr. Montrose, while a suspicious mist was before his eyes.

"God be praised!" shouted the banker, coming out of his maze. "Paul, my boy, I very humbly ask your pardon. What a fool I was, to be sure."

"I never blamed you, Mr. Matthews," said Paul. "Every thing was so against me that you could not believe my unaided statement. But, it is all clear to me now."

"Yes, my dear boy," cried the banker, joyfully, "and we'll bury the past, and let the future bring us happiness. How I have missed you, Paul. Nothing has gone right



THE TELL-TALE FINGER.

The Tell-tale Finger.

JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

ON, William—Mr. Volney, I thought you knew—I thought your brother had told you!" and two little palms covered the maiden's face as she shrunk away from the tall, stately-looking man who had been speaking so earnestly.

There his worst suspicions were verified. He recognized the murdered man, but it was not his brother, and a bitter groan burst from his lips, as he thought that his loved brother was a murderer. A film gathered over his eyesight, and staggering, he sunk to the ground beside the corpse. He strove to stanch the life-stream, but in vain; the man was dead.

As this fact forced itself upon his mind, William arose and stood in deep thought. He reflected upon the course he ought to pursue. At first he intended to say nothing,



since you went away. We lost Meta, and then I sent George away."

Their eyes met, when he spoke the name, but more in sorrow than anger.

Mr. Matthews resumed: "But we will have it all right again now. You shall take your place at the bank, and I'll have such a jubilee as old Willhampton never saw before. But where's mother? Bless me!"

Instead of ringing the bell for a servant, he hurried away himself in search of his wife. No one but himself should have the honor of telling her the good news. Neither could he wait to surprise her, but from his disjointed exclamations her woman's wit gleaned the facts at once.

The meeting was like the coming together of mother and son; and indeed he seemed a son to her, as she seemed a mother to him.

But there was yet a void: Meta was not there.

"Where is Meta?" he asked. It seemed a pity to cloud the happiness of the childless old couple, but he only asked the question that they had asked themselves, and each other, a score of times every day since their pet went away. And they gave him the same answer that they had heard so many times from each other's lips.

He said nothing of what he knew of Meta, but mentally resolved to devote his life, if necessary, to a search for the lost one.

He stayed at Willhampton a week; then he set out to fulfill his promise to Henry Vinton, promising the banker a speedy return.

CHAPTER XXX

HOME AGAIN!

COMING HOME!

How suggestive of joy are these two simple words—joy to the fond mother, the loving wife, the trusting maiden, who have waited so long for the absent ones. Coming home! Spared through all the perils they met, to carry happiness back to the anxious watchers. Alas, how many looked and hoped in vain!

Ella Martin read with joyful heart the welcome news from Henry. It was her first letter from him, and there was a modest glow upon her cheeks as she read the impassioned words over and over again. Were they not penned by him who was dearer to her than all the world beside? No more fears nor doubts, but with perfect faith and trust she awaited his coming.

The marriage of Dora with Norman Vinton made but little change in the everyday life at Arrancourt. To be sure, as mistress of Arrancourt, Dora made some changes, and exerted her authority; but, as before, Norman Vinton required all her time, and she made no complaints.

The invalid was sinking all the while. He kept his bed nearly all the time, and even his young wife's inexperienced eye saw that his days in the world would be few. To say that she feared the dread change would hardly be believed, yet she was not anxious for it. It was the present position of her husband, holding her there in the sick room, which she might be a reigning belle in the circles of fashion and wealth, that was distasteful to her. And she had another reason for desiring his recovery. She had a power over him that would bend him to her will—a power that was less potent over a dying man than over one imbued with hope and health. The foolish woman was not content with her triumph, but must needs stoop to paltry revenge.

Ella, in her goodness and simplicity, never thought of wealth. She loved Henry for himself. Reared at Arrancourt, it seemed that it must always be her home; and as all her modest wants had been supplied in the past, so it seemed that they would be in the future. She had forgiven Dora—for the scheming woman had been very kind to her since her marriage—and she told her of Henry's letter. Dora—perhaps we should say Mrs. Vinton, but it seems more out of place to us than it did even to Ella and her father—expressed much pleasure at the news. Was she, in anticipation of widowhood, plotting again?

It was the first time the sisters had spoken together of Henry since Ella's return, and Dora's seeming interest deceived Ella. She spoke freely, just as she had been wont to do before the strange season of gloom just past, and Dora encouraged her.

They were both standing near the window, but so earnest was their conversation, that a close carriage drew up to the door unnoticed. The sound of the driver's voice reached them, and they both looked in time to see Henry Vinton alighting from the carriage. Ella flew to meet him, and reached the door just as he was ascending the steps. With a cry of joy she threw her arms about his neck, and innocently held up her lips for the kiss of welcome. Ah! had Dora seen this! but she was still at the window watching her recreant sleuth-hound, Prince, as he ran from place to place about the familiar spot.

And she saw another gentleman alight from the carriage, and a lady, both strangers to her, but Ella knew them; and she gave Meta a loving embrace, and exclaimed: "Meta! Meta! you darling! I am so glad! Where have you been? Oh, we'll keep you now, shall we not, Henry?" "Certainly, if we can," replied Henry, his face beaming with happiness as he thought of the surprise he would give her and Paul Rodney.

Ella now noticed George Matthews, and she was at a loss how to act. She looked questioningly at Henry and Meta, and Meta quickly said:

"It is all forgotten now." This was sufficient, and she greeted George kindly, yet somewhat timidly.

Dora now made her appearance.

The meeting was quite embarrassing to Henry, but she passed through the ceremony of introduction with tolerable self-possession. There was a very slight hesitation, however, when he spoke of Dora as Mrs. Vinton. It was so strange, and withal, so repulsive.

Dora, however, was perfectly at ease, and welcomed the party to Arrancourt with charming grace and apparent pleasure. Appreciating the dignity of her exalted position, she was very gracious toward her step-son and his friends; but Henry felt all the while that she was glorying in her triumph.

After a brief space, during which Dora, with consummate tact, put every one at ease, she went with Henry to Norman Vinton's chamber.

The young man was shocked at his father's altered appearance. The face was pale, and thin almost to transparency; the eyes seemed ever changing; hollow as though some invisible power were pulling them back; again, they were full and glaring; and the hair, once black and luxuriant, was thin and bleached; not white nor gray, but of a lifeless, flaxen hue.

"You find me nearly gone," said the invalid, reaching out his hand toward Henry. "A few more days will take me. I should have gone long ago but for Dora. She has kept life in me so that I might see you again."

"No, no, father; we can not let you go," said Henry. "We will have you back to health again, if you will only let us. But you must throw off this despondency."

"No use," said Mr. Vinton, sadly. "I know I must die soon, and I have only been waiting for you. Now I must prepare for the end. Dora, dear, will you leave us for awhile? I have much to say to Henry that must not be delayed."

Dora complied reluctantly, for it seemed to her that she was giving Henry the advantage. What secrets had her husband that she should not know?

"Pen and paper," said Norman Vinton, when the door had closed behind his wife.

Henry went to the desk and got the required articles.

"Now write down every word," Henry put his pen to the paper, but at the first sentence he started and trembled so that he could not make a mark.

He controlled himself after awhile, and went on with his task.

All the time Dora was waiting in a suspense that was almost past endurance. Just when it seemed that she could not wait another minute, she heard Henry leave the chamber, and look the door after him. The ominous click of the bolt, as it slid into the socket, made her tremble.

Henry was away but a moment, returning with her father, as she knew by his heavy step along the hall. Then, after another season of waiting, there came a tap at her door.

"Your husband is waiting for you," said Henry.

Husband! why did he speak so? Ah! what would she not have given for the secret? She had lost all power over Henry. Her terrible secret was his.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 23.)

The Scarlet Hand:

OR,
The Orphan Heiress of Fifth Avenue.

A STORY OF NEW YORK HEARTS AND HOMES.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "THE AGE OF SPADERS," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WEAVING THE WEB.

DOCTOR JOHN MACDONALD was an aged gentleman of seventy. The snows of many winters had whitened his locks to the color of the driven snow. Yet still he was an extremely well preserved old gentleman, with a mind as vigorous and as clear as in the days long gone by, when he had attended faithfully to one of the largest practices ever possessed by any physician in New York city; and his practice was also one of the most lucrative in the city.

Doctor Macdonald had retired some years before the time of which we write, on an ample fortune, accumulated solely by his own personal exertions.

The doctor lived in a handsome brownstone front on Twenty-third street.

One morning just after breakfast, the doctor sat in his study enjoying his morning paper, when a servant entered with a message that a gentleman—by name, Eben Benson—desired to see the doctor in person on particular business.

"Show him in, John," said the doctor.

The servant, in a few minutes, introduced into the doctor's study, a gentleman in a rather rusty black suit. He had great gray-black eyes and sandy-colored hair, cropped rather short.

"Doctor Macdonald?" said the stranger, after the servant had withdrawn.

"Yes," said that gentleman.

"My name is Eben Benson. I am a

literary man by profession. I am in search of some information that I think you can give me, sir."

"I shall be delighted, sir, if it is in my power," said the doctor, who, having been informed that his visitor was a literary man, did not wonder at his seedy suit of black.

"You were, I believe, the family physician of Mr. Clinton Strathroy, of No. 268 Fifth avenue, when he was in the flesh?"

"Yes, sir, I was," said the doctor, wondering what this had to do with any information that he could possibly give his strange visitor.

"Do you remember the birth of his child, Allyne, some twenty-four or five years ago, or thereabouts?"

"Yes, sir, I was present on that occasion. I attended Mrs. Strathroy."

"So I understood, sir," said Mr. Benson. "Now, sir, I am about to come to the purpose of my visit. Was there any peculiar mark, or marks of any kind, on the infant, at its birth, by which it could be identified in after life, supposing it to have been lost?"

"No, sir, none that I am aware of," said the doctor, after thinking for a moment.

Mr. Benson seemed disappointed.

"No mark or marks, whatever?"

"No, sir."

"Then if the child had been lost when an infant, it could not have been identified except by its appearance, and if years had passed, and the face had changed, it could not have been identified at all?"

"No, sir," replied the doctor; "but will you allow me to ask, sir, why you wish this information? The object thereby to be gained?"

"I have had a dream, sir, three times in succession—and I believe in dreams. This dream was relative to a certain mark on the person of Allyne Strathroy. But if there isn't any particular mark upon the gentleman's body, of course the dream is a delusion and a snare."

The doctor examined his visitor closely, but saw nothing in his appearance to indicate a lack of sense, strange as his speech was.

"Well, I am really sorry, sir, that the gentleman hasn't some peculiar mark upon his person," said the doctor, willing to humor his visitor.

"It is a pity, sir," said the strange Mr. Benson, gravely.

"By the way," said the doctor, as a sudden thought occurred to him, "wouldn't a personal blemish that has come upon him since his birth answer your purpose?"

A gleam of fire shot from the eyes of the stranger; it was but an instant, then it was gone.

"I don't know, sir," he answered, soberly; "what is the nature of this blemish?"

"It's a bad scar on the great toe of the left foot. Young Allyne went, when he was about ten years old, swimming one day in the river, and on the shore stepped upon a piece of a bottle, which cut his toe to the bone, like a knife. It left a very ugly scar."

"On the large toe of the left foot—a scar," said Mr. Benson, as he noted it down in his memorandum book, and the doctor saw that his hand trembled excessively.

"Yes, sir," said the doctor.

"I am very much obliged to you," said the stranger, preparing to retire.

"Oh, not at all," replied the doctor. "I am sorry that it was not in my power to satisfy you in the other particular."

"I'll try and make this do, sir," said the stranger, bowing himself out of the room.

"A harmless maniac," said the doctor, laughing.

But, like Hamlet, there was method in the madness of Mr. Eben Benson.

In a little upper room on Nassau street sat an engraver at work.

A rap on the door caused him to pause, lift up his head and bid the rapper enter. And while the person who had rapped is entering, we will take a look at the engraver. He is a young man, not yet thirty, and his features have a decided German cast. He has a high, white forehead; very prominent, overhanging eyebrows; full blue eyes, and long golden hair pushed carelessly back behind his ears, which gives him a singular appearance. The engraver is a "dreamer," as the world calls those who think of something besides the necessities of life. It is plainly evident in his face. He is a student in abstract studies. Had he lived in olden times, he would have been a seeker for the philosopher's stone, and probably would have finished his career at the stake as a sorcerer, but as he lives in a modern age, he is an "expert," in what particular science we will soon see.

The visitor that entered the engraver's room, was a gentleman with long, black hair, clubbed in the Southern style, and gray-black eyes.

"Are you Mr. Hendrich?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the engraver.

"You are an expert, I believe, in regard to handwriting. If I mistake not, you were the witness, in the Towland will case, who was called upon to decide whether the signature attached to the will was genuine or not?"

"I was, sir," replied the engraver.

This was the art that he was an "expert" in. He had a marvelous instinct—it seemed to be that, for he himself sometimes could not explain the process by

means of which he decided that one signature was forged, and another a genuine one.

"I have a curiosity to test your skill, sir. I have here two signatures which I wish you would look at, and give me your opinion regarding them," said the stranger.

Then, from his memorandum-book he produced two slips of paper. Each slip of paper had a signature upon it.

The engraver took them in his hand and examined them carefully. Then he took a magnifying glass from his work-bench, and with it closely scrutinized the slips of paper.

"Well, sir, what do you think?" asked the stranger.

"One of these signatures is a genuine one—the other is an imitation of it, but extremely well done," replied the engraver.

"Which is the genuine?"

"This one," and the engraver pointed to one of the slips of paper which seemed much older than the other.

"You feel sure of this?"

"Yes, sir," replied the expert, firmly; and then he continued: "If you will take the glass, I think I can point out to you a very perceptible difference in the signatures."

The stranger took the glass and adjusted it to his eye.

"If you will look at the tail of the y in this signature, you will notice that it has a broad, careless sweep; the writer is used to writing it and makes the sweep without thought. In the other—the forged signature—the sweep is labored—it is an imitation—quite a close one, too; but it lacks the careless freedom of the other."

Now that the expert pointed it out, the stranger saw the difference, slight as it was, although he had examined the signatures closely and had not been able to detect any difference in them, except that one bore the marks of age and the other was freshly written.

"Yes, I see," said the stranger.

There are some other things of the same nature perceptible to my eyes in the two signatures, but not near as plain as the one I have called your attention to."

"You seem quite certain about it?"

"Oh, I am."

"I don't doubt that you would be willing to swear that one of these signatures is a forgery of the other, even in a court of justice," said the stranger, in a jocular manner.

"I shouldn't have the slightest hesitation," returned the expert. "But, by the way, I am a little curious on one point. I have given you some information, now can you oblige me with some?"

"Certainly."

"Ain't these signatures written by two brothers? one attempting to imitate the hand of the other?"

"No; not to my knowledge."

"That is strange," said the expert, with a puzzled air. "I have a theory that there is a family resemblance in the handwriting of relatives. I never have been mistaken yet; but if the two men that wrote these signatures are not related by blood, then I'm afraid that there's something wrong about my theory."

"They are not, sir, I am sure," said the stranger.

"How much, sir?"

"For what?"

"For this information."

"Oh, nothing, sir."

"I am very much obliged."

"Not at all."

"Then the stranger went straight before a police justice and swore out a warrant.

The charge was the Scarlet Crime.

MURDER.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CUP AT THE LIP.

It was the evening of the very same day that the mysterious stranger had the interview with the expert, who told forged signatures from genuine ones, that Allyne Strathroy and the lawyer Chubbet sat together in the mansion of the latter.

"Well, is it all arranged?" asked Allyne, who was in full evening dress, as was also the lawyer, as though they were about to attend a party or a ball.

"Yes, everything is prepared. I got Blanche to drink a glass of drugged wine, about fifteen minutes ago; it will throw her into a stupor for about four hours. My housekeeper is now dressing her for the ceremony. You see Blanche is unconscious of what is going on around her, although, with assistance, she can stand up."

"But can you trust your housekeeper?" asked Allyne.

"Oh, yes; she's a sensible woman, and won't tell tales out of school," replied Chubbet. "I expect the minister every moment. The housekeeper and I will act as witnesses. It won't take but a moment. And before Miss Blanche wakes to consciousness again, she will be wholly yours."

"It can not fail," said Allyne, a gleam of triumph upon his face.

A ring at the door bell and the servant announced the minister.

The lawyer greeted the gentleman, who was a most decreed "black sheep," if ever there was one that wore the pastor's holy garb.

"We are waiting for you," said Chubbet, shaking hands with the reverend gentleman, who had a decidedly unreverend face.

"Dr. Pike, Mr. Strathroy, the bridegroom," said Chubbet, introducing.

"By the way, doctor, as my ward is quite unwell, the ceremony will be strictly private."

"I am ready, Mr. Chubbet, whenever you are," said the doctor.

"I'll see if my ward is ready," and the lawyer hastened up-stairs.

Blanche, dressed in white silk, her face paler far than her bridal robes, lay on the sofa, unconscious of all that was passing around her. The potent drug that she had swallowed had deadened all her senses.

"Is she all ready, Mrs. Grange?" the lawyer asked, of the housekeeper.

"Yes, sir; all ready," replied the housekeeper, who was an elderly, heavy-built woman, with a stolid face.

"Let us get her up into a chair; it will look better," said Chubbet, who had a great regard for Chubbet, even though he knew that every spectator that was to witness the scene to come, understood the nature of Blanche's sickness.

So the lawyer and the housekeeper raised the senseless girl, and placed her in an easy chair, the cushioned back of which supported the beautiful head of the helpless girl who was about to be sacrificed on the altar of passion, with the god mammon as high priest.

Not a single particle of pity entered the heart of the old lawyer, not even when he held the life form of the young girl in his arms, and felt the dull beating of her heart.

"There, that will look better," said Chubbet, surveying the young girl.

"She looks all right, sir; a little pale," replied the housekeeper.

"Yes, but we can't help that," he said.

"Well, it doesn't make any difference," observed the housekeeper.

"Not a bit," said the lawyer. "By the way, you had better stand by her, and keep your eyes upon her; she might fall out of the chair."

"Yes, sir, I will."

"Now, I'll go down-stairs and bring them up," said the lawyer, with another look at his helpless victim.

Down-stairs hurried the lawyer. He was eager to have the affair finished.

"Every thing is prepared," he said, as he entered the room. "Follow me up-stairs, please, and we'll have the ceremony take place at once."

The three proceeded up-stairs.

"My ward, Miss Blanche Maybury, the bride, Doctor Pike," said Chubbet, introducing. The doctor bowed to the senseless girl with as much ceremony as if he thought she heard the introduction, though his keen eye had instantly perceived the situation that she was in, when he entered the room.

"Now, Allyne, take her hand," said Chubbet. "Assist Miss Blanche to rise, Mrs. Grange."

By main force, for Blanche was as helpless as an infant, the housekeeper lifted her from the chair, stood her upon her feet, then held her up; while Allyne took the nerveless hand of the girl within his own.

This was his triumph; but even to him it seemed like a mockery to wed the helpless girl.

"Go ahead, doctor," said Chubbet.

And so the ceremony proceeded.

A few brief minutes and Blanche Maybury became the wedded wife of Allyne Strathroy.

With his strong arms he folded the young girl to his heart, and pressed a burning kiss, full of passionate love, upon the pale lips.

But the bride—oh, the mockery of that title in such a wedding as this!—gave back no return kiss. The yielding flesh he held within his arms was a marble statue.

But Allyne felt that he had triumphed. At last he had won the prize—the prize, to gain which he had risked all—dared as few men had dared before; taken all hazards, even to staining his soul with a crimson crime, and his hand scarlet with blood.

The cup of happiness was at his lip!

The loud ringing of the door bell caused all the actors in this terrible scene to start, excepting the victim—the senseless girl.

Then came the sound of hurried footsteps on the stairs. The door was flung violently open, and a servant rushed into the room, but ere he could speak the doorway was filled by strange visitors. First came Mordaunt, the actor, then two policemen and then Leonard Osmond.

"What means this intrusion?" cried Chubbet, in anger.

"I have here a warrant to arrest that man!" cried Mordaunt, pointing to Allyne, who still held the senseless form of Blanche to his breast. But, on the entrance of the little knot of people, he had thrust his left hand in his breast. The action was concealed from view by the head of the girl.

"Upon what charge?" asked Chubbet, in wonder.

"Murder!" cried Mordaunt.

All started in amazement, except the newcomers.

"Dog!" cried Allyne, "you have woven a web around me—have hunted me down—now take your reward," and, before any one could guess his intention, he drew a pistol—a small Derringer—from his breast pocket, leveled it full at the head of Mordaunt, and fired. With a groan, the actor fell forward on his face.

Strathroy uttered a yell of demoniac triumph as he beheld his foe fall; then, with the spring of a tiger, he dashed past the policemen—who had not expected the attempt—and through the door. Down the stairs he went and through the entry at headlong speed, the officers following quick upon his track.

Out into the street went Strathroy, then dashed up the avenue at the top of his speed, and turned into Thirty-eighth street. The officers followed hard upon him.

The streets were almost deserted, and the pursued and the pursuers had it all to themselves.

Down Thirty-eighth street toward the East river went the chase.

Every now and then a fresh policeman would join in as the fugitive passed his boat.

Strathroy ran like a hunted beast. His breath came thick and fast. His pursuers were so close upon him, that it gave him no chance to double upon—and throw them off the scent.

They were pressing him straight for the river.

As yet the officers had not used their weapons, evidently believing that they could run the fugitive down and capture him.

"If they are unarmed I am safe. The river is before me. I will find either safety or a grave in it." Such were the thoughts that passed through the brain of the hunted man as he ran steadily onward.

It was a bright moonlight night. Oh, how in his heart the fugitive cursed the moonbeams!

The river was in sight. The officers uttered a shout.

They saw no avenue of escape open for the hunted man.

"Devils, I defy ye!" gasped Allene, as he sprang upon the pier, and still ran onward.

Another shout came from the officers. The fugitive now must either surrender or leap into the river.

Allene reached the end of the pier, paused one single moment, then leaped boldly into the water.

The officers uttered a cry of rage. They rushed to the end of the pier.

Allene appeared above water some little distance out. The officers fired. The fugitive disappeared.

The cry went up that he was hit. But a few minutes more and again he appeared above water, still further out. It was clear he was an excellent swimmer.

Again the officers fired, and again he disappeared. But they knew this time that he was not hit. So, eagerly, they waited for him to appear the third time.

He came to the surface almost beyond revolver range. The officers fired again.

A groan of pain came over the surface of the water; the fugitive threw up his arms—beat the water in agony for a few moments, then, with a cry that thrilled through the ears of the officers like a knife cut, he sank to rise no more before their gaze.

The clouds gathered over the face of the moon, the rays breaking through formed strange shapes, and in the sky came the clear semblance of a great scarlet hand!

Allene Strathroy was never seen again in this life.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 20.)

Cruiser Crusoe:

LIFE ON A TROPIC ISLE.

BY LAFAYETTE LAFOREST.

NUMBER TWENTY-NINE.

The country I was passing through was arid and rude. Here and there were trees and bushes, and generally grass; but the general features were bad. Huge, jagged, rough stones—many as big as a small house—were piled up and thrown in all directions, with deep fissures between them—just the place for a man to fall through and break his legs. But for the keen sagacity of my dog, such, I believe, would have been my fate.

I found several fountains, but scarcely one fit to drink from. The stuff in them was horrible. Probably, before the eruption and earthquake, they had been visited by droves of wild animals, such as zebras, which, after splashing and rolling themselves all night, had left the shallow pool, about twenty yards across and from six to twelve inches deep, in every respect like water pumped from a farmyard.

The hill-sides were covered by thorned bushes, which were terrible to contend against. Then it was very hot, and I had become very thirsty, as well as Tiger, who panted along with his tongue out of his mouth, until we came to a hill, perhaps the most rugged I ever climbed. At length, however, the summit was reached, and just as my dog took to his heels, I made out with my telescope a kind of a standing pool, green as grass on the top.

Away I ran, but had just mounted up a kind of natural step, when, while I was balancing myself to keep my footing, I discovered, to my horror, that I had put my foot upon the tail of a great dark-green snake, who was up in an instant, and stood confronting me, his hideous head as high as my chest.

Fatigued and used up as I was with my run, I had just sense and quickness enough left to leap over the side of the rock, and roll myself amid the bushes. The snake was after me, but I had gained upon it, and raising myself up, crushed its head with a great stone as it advanced.

For a moment or two, my sensations were such that I had to pause, having always an instinctive horror of the reptile which is the native and natural enemy of

man, since it was doomed to be bruised by his heel.

As soon as I recovered myself, I made for the pool, where I found my dog wallowing in the water with great delight. By removing the green mantle off the stagnant pool, I was able to obtain myself a drink, which was exceedingly refreshing.

I had noticed, as I came down the hill, that some red and white geese had risen from this pond to take refuge on another small one of rain water, at no great distance, where I followed them, and shot two. But when I had secured the game, it struck me that I had lost the trail of the fugitives, so I hurried away in the direction I believed them to have taken.

It was over a wide, undulating plain, black with dense thorn bushes. My progress was now extremely slow, as the way was so rude; but about evening a last undulation having been surmounted, I saw before me the sea, and in the distance the coast of Africa.

But where were the fugitives?

I took my telescope, and swept the waters, already dark and gloomy under the influence of night.

There was the canoe—but what is this I see beyond? A village, with numerous canoes hauled up on the beach. My heart sank within me, for, in the company of a hostile tribe, would not Pablina be as much lost to me as if she were gone to the interior wilds of the vast continent? But I was desperate, and would not be defeated, so determined to risk the visit, even if it resulted in my being taken a prisoner.

But to do this it would be necessary to return to my boat, and for this I was too utterly exhausted that night. We had to camp once more in the open air, in sight of the distant hills and rugged shores of the continent. I slept under a rock, without a fire, so fearful was I of putting the villagers on the other side on the alert.

Before the sun was in the skies, and while the chill that precedes dawn was on the earth, I took my way back; this time a different way along the coast. It was an arduous task; but there was no danger of my being lost; and after a day spent in exertions, which were almost Herculean in character, I reached the spot where my boat lay rocked upon the slowly-moving waves.

But, great as was my impatience, I did not start until sundown, as I dreaded, above all, alarming the natives. Once they took a start into the interior, all hope of rejoining them would be gone. The night was cloudy and threatening; so that I had to be cautious in the extreme, especially as my boat was wanting in ballast. The wind was light and puffy, which indicated a disposition to change.

From the moment I started, my eyes were directed toward the heavens; while my two hands were engaged, one holding the tiller, the other the mainsheet, to be ready to let go in case of any puff being unusually dangerous.

The sky was black in most parts, though here and there a break could be seen where the stars shone brightly, but the scud of the clouds seemed to indicate an excessively dirty night. The act of a prudent man would have been to anchor for the night in some sheltered bay, where I could weather the storm. But my brain was on fire—my spirits were roused to an unnatural pitch of excitement—and, in fact, I was in the mood in which men do desperate things.

My canoe, careering over to the harbor gunwale, rushed along before the breeze. Soon after skirting the coast some time, the dim, shadowy outline of the hilly coast of the mainland became visible, and I stood directly for it. It soon, however, became evident that some other element than the wind was at work, for while I stood in directly for the land, I was being swept past it with a rapidity quite alarming.

Then I knew that there was a powerful current, which it would require all my ingenuity to stem.

Instead, therefore, of steering head on to the land, as I had been, I drew aft my sheet, and steered a little to the south of the course I intended to follow, in order, in some measure, to counteract the influence of the current, which swept me, almost hopelessly, to the northward. In this way I made but little leeway, though the puffs and light winds were very vexatious and annoying.

At length, however, I seemed likely to realize my expectations, for, by my observations, the land seemed to be only half a mile off, while, in the hazy light cast by the stars, I could see the village toward which I was heading fast.

But soon I found that, between myself and the shore, there ran a line of white water, which I knew to be a reef almost level with the sea, but over which the tide was running with intense rapidity. That there must be some channel I was certain; but how, in that dark, gloomy night, was I to discover it?

No time was to be lost. The tide was sweeping me past, as if I had been carried down a mill-race; and trusting to my Indian girl to assist me in my trouble, I fired my two barrels as a signal.

In an instant the village was alive. I saw men and women, some undoubtedly in a kind of European costume, rushing about with torches, which were successively lighted at a fire that burned in the center of the semi-circle of huts. They called loudly to me, they waved their torches, they ran right into the water; but the

roar of the surf concealed every word they said from me.

Still the conviction flashed across my mind that these were English; and then my sight grew dizzy, just as, letting go the rudder handle, I took up my telescope.

Then, from a terrible revulsion of feeling, I became insensible.

When I recovered I was gliding along the coast with great rapidity, wind and tide being both against me. The village was out of sight—the village which, I experienced a moral certainty, not only contained Pablina, but my father, my mother, my uncle, my sisters, and my cousin.

I do not say that I recognized them. It was manifestly impossible at the great distance they were off; but it had long been my conviction that they were alive and in companionship with Pablina. It often struck me that this girl was a kind of emissary from them to me. She was better able to brave the perils of the deep than they were—more used to the management of a canoe; and thus to her, it was my belief, had been confided the important task of letting me know of their existence.

Then came the sudden discovery that I loved her—that I wished to make her remain with me and be my wife.

I was sure that there was a great struggle in her mind. That she returned my affection I had not the slightest doubt; but she was too noble-minded, too good to accept that which she thought to be the right of another. Every thing mysterious in her manner, in her actions, was now clearly explained, and my mind was in a frantic state of doubt and uncertainty.

But other things occupied my attention just then. I was being swept past the spot where I had discovered the village with fearful rapidity, and by no ingenuity of mine could I control my fate.

Alas, how much depends in this life on trifles!

I had not left my anchor at home, as the Dutchman found he had done in the storm, but I had never thought of making myself one.

And still the gale rose, and I could not but look in some degree to my safety. It is true that I almost felt that I had done with life, but yet instinct, in the case of our worst troubles, will prompt us to save that we affect to despise. I looked to leeward.

The sky was hot and sultry looking. It can be described in no other way. I knew what that meant. Unless I reached some shelter before the gale fell upon me with all its real might, it would be utterly hopeless to think of escaping with life.

But here it came, and I had just time to lower the sail of the canoe, when she heeled over, and away I flew before the still rising blast. This lasted an hour, my only safety being that the sea had not yet been lashed to its utmost fury. Then a dark mass loomed in the distance, and before I knew what was about to happen, the canoe struck, and I was cast upon a sandy beach, once more the shipwrecked Sailor Crusoe.

When I came to myself—the night was passed under an overhanging cliff, where I lay half-stunned, half-sleepy—I found that I had been wrecked upon a naked and arid shore, my boat knocked to pieces, my powder all wet, and everything else a ruin. Nothing left me but an empty gun and my faithful dog.

This was a misfortune enough to have broken any man's heart. All my labors were in vain—all that I had endured, suffered, and done, was undone. The work of years had to be gone over. I was as helpless as when cast upon my deserted island with nothing in the way of worldly wealth but a clasp-knife and a broken oyster-shell.

But despondency was of no avail, so picking up my now useless gun, to carry it as a club or defensive weapon, I determined to explore the interior of the island. But one glance sufficed. I knew where I was!

I was within half a mile of my cave!

Then I fell on my knees and thanked Heaven, which had been so merciful to me as in this fearful strait to have brought me to the only haven of rest which existed on that part of the earth. Even the regret I felt at other disappointments was palliated by this piece of excessive good fortune. My dog itself appeared to be aware that he was at home, for he jumped about, gambled, and then suddenly took to his heels in search of his mates.

That night I slept in my old cave, being too exhausted to look about me, however impatient I might be to examine into the state of my domesticated animals and plantation, all of which had been too long neglected.

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THE NORTHERN PINE.

BY J. L. HERSBY.

When the mournful wail of the autumn gale
Was heard in the pathless wood,
And its golden pride, o'er the hills strewn wide,
Fell around me where I stood:
The same strong hand that so harsh could seize
And bring such woe from the leafless trees
Brought tones as soft as the zephyr breeze
From a harp of a happier mood.

'Twas the brave old pine that disdained to white
For the loss of the summer sheen;
Through the sultry heat and driving sleet
He can keep his quiet mien:
Winter may come, it will not annoy
His dreamy song of contented joy:
And he smiles at the frost, that can never destroy
His robe of perennial green.

Unbleached pine! Be thy courage mine
In the midst of changing time,
That the chilling breath of approaching death
On my heart-strings soft may chime!
Let my soul dwell not in earthly clod,
By the step of the dark despoiler trod,
But by holy trust may I dwell with God
In his pure and changeless clime.

Found on the Plains.

A HUNTER'S ADVENTURE.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

As the first gray streaks of dawn darted across the plains, a hunter rose from before his little fire, and stroked the neck of his white horse.

"We have a long, cold day before us, Montezuma," he said, addressing the animal, "and a wearisome ride, too. I wish I could quit this wild life, go to the civilized States, and be somebody. But that would spoil the romance of our lives, wouldn't it, horse? Most everybody's heard of Fish Tyler and his 'brother'—which is you, Montezuma. That dandified fellow, with the last batch of emigrants, said that they had our names in the story-papers, and that every person, old and young, big and little, was reading about us. Wonder if he didn't stretch things a little? Of course he did. What would people want to know about an old hunter and his old white nag?"

And the speaker laughed at the thoughts his question had called up, and put his foot in the stirrup.

"When it's cold," cried the hunter, as the cold northern wind struck him full in the face. "And we'll have to go right against the breeze, too. I'll ride you pretty brisk at first, horse, to heat your blood, and then we'll go along right decently, provided the wolves ain't snapping at your heels. I half expect the great gray circumstances to be on our track in a short time; but then we'll manage to keep ahead. They'll stop to chomp the bones I picked before it was light, while you were sleeping with one eye open, and then they'll come on. Right oblique, Montezuma, emperor of Mexico!"

As he uttered the military command the hunter turned his horse's head to the north, and galloped away quite briskly.

A braver or truer-hearted man never lived than Fish Tyler, whom we have just heard speak to the sole sharer of his wild and perilous life—his horse. He often guided emigrants across the plains, never accepting any thing for his services save, now and then, a bar of lead and several ounces of powder. He was a middle-aged man, but not good-looking. Still there was a gleam in those large eyes which would draw one to him, assuring him that a genial heart beat in the hunter's bosom. Many a talented traveler read his nature, and discovered that he was a diamond in the rough. They tried to persuade him to relinquish his wild life and settle in the States.

"Gentlemen," he would invariably answer, "do not tempt me. I believe the time is coming when I will leave the plains; but man can never persuade me to go."

If man could not persuade him, who could? Woman?

Let us see.

The hunter had not ridden far when he perceived that it was growing colder, and, as he looked up at the canopy of leaden clouds that stretched from horizon to horizon, a snow-flake touched his lips.

"No more than I expected," he said, audibly, stroking Montezuma's mane with one of his great hands. "It has snowed like blazes a good many miles north of this. But I don't think we will get much of it, horse. I wonder where the wolves are. I wish they'd give us a little chase; it would warm me up."

The animal's gallop had dwindled into a walk, and the hunter was blowing his breath upon his hands.

Suddenly he heard a faint noise, which caused him to rein Montezuma in and cry "zip," the word he used instead of "whoa." The horse stood stock still, but pricked up his ears and turned his head toward the south.

"Thought I heard a wolf, Montezuma," said Tyler, who almost invariably addressed himself to his horse. "I guess we'll listen a minute and see if I was right."

Horse and rider had not listened a minute when they heard the prolonged howl of a single wolf.

"General Gray Wolf is marshaling his forces," said Fish. "I wonder if Colonels Black Wolf and Piute will join him. If they do there'll be fun. Ha! there goes blacky's howl now; put in yours, Piute. Gosh! they're closer than I thought!" he exclaimed as a howl sounded terribly distinct. "Forward, horse. This promises to be lively fun."

With a snort Montezuma bounded forward, and the next second he was carrying his intrepid rider over the plains, at seemingly break-neck speed.

"I'll not unsling old Nevermiss till things look desperate," muttered the hunter, as he galloped along with the northern blast cutting his face, and freezing his black whiskers into a mass of ice. "The circumstances ain't in sight yet; but they ain't far off."

"Ha!" he suddenly exclaimed, looking before his horse's feet, "a train passed along here yesterday, and I think I detected strange that I didn't see it. A little faster, horse; the Piutes and black devils have all joined the gray ones, and are coming right lively. I can see them on our track, and glancing backward for the twentieth time, he saw a dark mass between him and the leaden horizon. It was a pack of wolves.

Now and then a snow-flake struck the hunter, and told him that a storm was at no great distance.

At his last command the horse exerted himself and increased his speed. Tyler looked with pride upon his noble animal, covered with foam as white as himself.

All at once Montezuma paused and stood motionless as a statue. His head was bent

toward the earth, and the frosted breath streamed from his distended nostrils.

"A snake!" exclaimed the hunter, as he leaned over to look before the horse.

The next instant, with a cry of horror, he started back in his saddle, and gazed shudderingly at a sight between his horse's hoofs.

The pale and beautiful features of a young girl were upturned to him. Her head lay between Montezuma's forefeet, and her little shoes almost touched his hind ones. Strange to say, the noble animal had paused directly over her, not injuring her in the least. She was bonnetless, and her golden hair was wet and partly covered by a coat of thin ice.

It took the hunter but a moment to recover his self-possession, when he leaped to the ground and extricated the girl from beneath his horse's feet. Several of her long tresses were frozen to the long wet grass, but he gently loosened them and raised her in his arms.

"Why, I believe she's dead," he said, gazing upon the marble features. "Poor child! she must have died last night. I wonder how she came here."

Then he sat down upon the ground and placed her head in his lap. Then his horny fingers encircled her wrist, and he started with a cry of joy.

"By Jove! she's not dead," he exclaimed, "but she's mighty nigh. A good rubbing and a little water would bring her too. But I can't do it here; the wolves are too close. I'm in a pretty fix, ain't I? Right out in the plains with a nearly dead woman! Well, it beats the Jews. Gosh! the wolves are close, and I must be off. I guess I can manage the girl and the howling devils, too."

A minute later the hunter was in the saddle with the lifeless girl in his arms. He spoke to Montezuma, and the horse, greatly recruited by his short rest, dashed forward faster than ever.

Suddenly Tyler dropped the reins over the pommel of the saddle, and turned his attention to the wolf of the plains. He unbuttoned her sleeves and rubbed her plump white arms till they blushed beneath his hard palms. Beneath the friction the pulse began to resume its regular pulsations, and color gradually came to the cheeks. Ceasing his labor for a moment, the hunter drew a flask from a pouch at his side and held it to the white lips. They gently parted, and a quantity of the brandy found its way between them.

Presently the girl opened her eyes, tried



FOUND ON THE PLAINS.

in vain to comprehend her situation, and then closed them again.

"She's all right, now," murmured the hunter, with a smile. "She's better than ten dead women yet. I suppose she belongs to the train that made the track I am in. But how they got separated beats me, old as I am. Where're the wolves? Jehu!"

The look he threw backward was enough to cause him to close his lips firmly and unsling his rifle.

While he had been attending to his lovely charge the wolves had gained wonderfully upon him, and he knew that he would soon be brought to bay.

And what could he do with a gang of the ravenous animals, with a fainting girl to impede his actions? Nothing, the reader will unhesitatingly answer.

The hunter rose in the stirrups and took a long look ahead. But the train upon which he had expected to feast his eyes was not in sight, and he threw a pitying glance upon the features, pale as death before him.

Though the noble Montezuma made mighty efforts to save the lives he bore upon his back, the wolves gained continually; and, at last, the daring hunter, with a look of fearful determination, not unmixed with despair, wheeled his steed and faced his enemies.

"Come on, devils of the plains!" he shouted, defiantly, waving his wolf-skin cap as though he had suddenly been bereft of reason. "Fish Tyler ain't afraid of all the wolves that ever howled. Come on black, gray and Piute, and get a bullet for your trouble. I don't care for my old self. I've got to hand in my checks sometime, and I might do it now as well as some other day. No, I don't care a cuss for myself, but I hope God will save this girl from your teeth. She's an angel, she is; but I'm a miserable sinner. Come nearer, I want to shoot!"

For some unaccountable cause the mad and half-frenzied gang paused, as though a "death line" had been drawn which they were afraid to cross.

"Afraid!" shouted the hunter, putting his cap on the end of his gun, and waving it over his head. "Hurrah! hurrah! Fish Tyler's whipped a gang of wolves without shooting once! Who ever thought he could do it? You never did, girl, nor you Montezuma, nor even I. But, by George! they ain't whipped yet, for they're coming on again."

Sure enough the western demons were advancing, and the hunter quickly donned his cap and threw his rifle to his shoulder. A quick aim was followed by a sharp report, and the foremost wolf fell to be de-

voured alive. During the short time in which it took the pack to devour their leader, Tyler managed to reload, and a second wolf went to the ground.

"I can't shoot all day," muttered the hunter, shaking his horn near his ear, "for powder is scarce. There's about twenty loads left yet; and, beside, Nevermiss is a little dirty. But—hello! what's that?"

He had glanced to the left, and descried a dark mass moving toward him. A second look sent a shiver down his throat.

"Buffalo! buffalo! buffalo!" he screamed, raising himself in the stirrups. "Now, little girl, we're saved. The Almighty sent them this way on purpose to save us! I know He did. Here they come! Now there'll be fun!"

The young girl had recovered from her second swoon, and Tyler held her up that she might witness their salvation.

On, came the great herd, and, for a moment, it seemed as though our friends would be trampled to death. But the leader saw the wolves, and the herd veered to the right. Presently the wolves wheeled them, and the next moment were in full pursuit.

"Saved!" shouted Tyler, discharging his rifle at the flying pack. "Saved by Providence! I'm going to be a better old man from this hour. North, horse, north!"

Montezuma turned, and again they were riding north. The horse knew the cardinal points as well as man does. They rode slowly, and the girl related her story, while the snow flakes fell fast.

The train, which was ahead, belonged to her uncle. She had occupied the rear wagon, and the preceding evening had dismounted, unbeknown to the party, and retraced her steps to hunt for a ring she had dropped. She never thought of becoming bewildered, or benumbed by the cold. She encountered both disasters, and could not resist. This was the story she told her preserver, and at nightfall they reached the train. Shouts of joy rent the chilly air at her safe return, and the hunter learned that those who searched for her became lost on the plains, and had returned to the train but a few minutes before his arrival.

Tyler accompanied the emigrants to their destination, where, after the lapse of several months, he married Winnie Wayward, whom he "found on the plains."

Though he dubbed himself "old," he was just turning thirty-five, and fifteen years Winnie's senior. But their affection was Platonic, and I see no reason why the match should not have ended in a wedding.

The cussed varmint warn't long a-comin'. An' we got ready to give her a proper reception, as the sayin' is.

Rube struck her first, an' while she was blinkin' her red eyes, an' shakin' her head an' growlin', I let her hev it with the pole uv the ax right atween the ears.

"It war a good blow, an' she let go all bolts an' tumbled end over end to the groun', nearly squashin' one uv the cubs, an' howlin' an' 'arin' uv the air with her claws, she war so mad.

"Twicet she kin up at us, an' both times we sent her a-tumblin' jess es before. The



FOUND ON THE PLAINS.

Fish Tyler is now an accomplished gentleman, residing in Cleveland, and Winnie is happy as wife can be. Though engrossed with mercantile pursuits, he is ever ready to relate the story of "Found on the Plains," and tell how a woman, not a man, persuaded him to relinquish his hunter life.

Camp-Fire Yarns.

Treed by a "She-bar."

"I don't make no difference what yer hev seed, or what yer heva't, I tell yer I wouldn't be afraid to tackle any bar livin', less it war a grizzly, an' them I admits ar too much fur one man."

"Ye wouldn't, hey? No, I reckon not, fur yer don't know what a mad she-bar ar. I'll bet my rifle here ag'in a coon-skin, yer never even seen one."

"Well, I don't know es how."

"I knowed it, or ye wouldn't a talked sich foolishness, fur I tell yer that a old she-bar, with her cub, an' pizen mean to tackle, an' yer kin bet onto it."

"What the blazes ar you two greenhorns a-gabblin' about that?" growled an old, grizzled trapper, who was seated near by where the young fellows were disputing as to the merits and demerits of the black bear, in a hostile point of view.

"Why, Ned Connolly, here, says he wouldn't mind pitchin' in, single-handed, with a she-bar who hed her cubs along."

was the reply.

"He wouldn't, wouldn't he? Well, then, I would," said the old trapper. "An' I kin tell him he would be powerful apt to pitch out again, that ar' ef he could."

"I tell you, lad," he continued, "it ain't no joke to run foul uv one uv them critters, an' ef yer don't mind I'll tell yer a leetle circumstance es happened to me onc't—me an' my pardner, when we war trappin' up on the border uv the Staked Plains."

"A braver comrade, nor a better one than Rube Wright never lived, an' him an' me got to be powerful fond uv one 'nuther, an' es a matter uv course, we hitched teams an' trapped an' hunted in-cohort."

"I war a strong firm, an' I tell yer the way we made the fur fly war a caution to beavers an' muskrats. Close by whar we hed the traps war a fine piece of timber, an' one day sez Rube, sez he, 'I see a lot uv bees buzzin' around the edge uv the timber yonder, an' I'm thinkin' that's a bee-tree in thar sum'mers.'"

"Yes, boyces, she-bars ar bad sum'times."

"He knowed I war monstrous fond uv honey, an' he larked to see me grup the ax an' start right away."

"Well, we ketch'd a cuple uv the bees, an' lined 'em nicely, an' in half a hour we war standin' under a whoppin' big tree, lookin' up whar we see the insects comin' outen a hollow limb. 'Twar too big to cut the tree war, an' so sez Rube, sez he, 'We've got to climb her, Jake, an' I agreed to thet, an' we both got red-dy.'"

"Our heads war so full of honey thet mornin', thet we acterly kin off from the cabin 'bout our rifles, which ar' a thing yer must never do, lads, under no circumstances, es we thought es how we couldn't shoot the bees, an' thar warn't likely to be enny thing else."

"But thar's whar we war mistaken."

"We war both a standin' lookin' up to whar the hollow limb stuck out, an' a-thinkin' 'whar loads uv honey thar war into it, when all to onc't thar kin outen the chap, paral, clost by, the all-fiercest savagewovin' thet ever I heerd, even from a grizzly."

"Rube he jumped like a load uv double bees hed struck him, an' afore I knowed whar he war arter, he war half way up thet tree, a-hollerin' at me to kin up too."

"I waited a minitu to see what the thunder it war, when suddently out rushed a big black bar, thin es a fence-rail, an' madder'n a hull nest uv bald hornets, with a cuple uv cubs a-trottin' along arter her."

"I didn't wait much longer, fur she war a ugly-lookin' brute, an' no mistake, an' meant lots uv mischief, so I throwed the lariat, which I hed coiled up in my hand, over my shoulder, an' gripp'd the ax tight, I shoved up arter Rube who war already amongst the branches waitin' fur me."

"We know'd the bar could climb es well es we, fur the bark war powerful rough, but we thought to keep her back with the ax, an' a big club thet I cut off fur Rube arter I got up."

"The cussed varmint warn't long a-comin'. An' we got ready to give her a proper reception, es the sayin' is."

Rube struck her first, an' while she was blinkin' her red eyes, an' shakin' her head an' growlin', I let her hev it with the pole uv the ax right atween the ears."

"It war a good blow, an' she let go all bolts an' tumbled end over end to the groun', nearly squashin' one uv the cubs, an' howlin' an' 'arin' uv the air with her claws, she war so mad."

"Twicet she kin up at us, an' both times we sent her a-tumblin' jess es before. The

was the reply.



FOUND ON THE PLAINS.

last time seemed to satisfy her, fur arter growlin' an' eyenin' us awhile, she lay down at the foot uv the tree, es much es to say, 'You jess stay up thar while I stays down here, an' see who'll git played out soonest!'

"We seed what her game war, an' we both looked at one another an' burst out a-larin', though we know'd twarn't no joke."

"Well, thar lay thet bar all thet day an' night, an' when mornin' kin thar she war yet, squatted on her hind quarters, lookin' an' winkin' at us in a way thet made my dander rise red-hot. Rube an' me war sittin' on two limbs thet growed out side by side, mabeby two or three feet apart, an' parside level, so we could talk 'bout enny trouble."

"Long toward evenin', I guess the sun war about a hour high, Rube sez all at onc't, es ef a idea had struck him."

"I tell yer, Jake, I ar powerful weak to the stummick, an' I'm goin' outen this while I've got strength to travel."

"Yer can't travel, Rube, sez I, fur the cussed varmint 'll grup ye afore, yer hev got to the bottom."

"Can't we rope the brute, Jake? sez he, arter a minit's thinkin', an' with thet he cum right into my head how the thing mout be managed."

"I took the lariat offen my shoulder, an' looked to see ef the noose war all right, an' then we tied one end to thet furthest limb, the one Rube war on, an' let t'other one down to whar the critter war sittin'."

"When he see the rope comin' down he riz up, an' raised hisself ag'in the tree by his forepaws, an' es soon es the rope kin in reach he grupp'd it in his teeth an' giv it a hard pull. Then he let loose an' begin knockin' it about with his paws, fust on one side an' then on t'other."

"Thet war what we wanted, fur we knowed he'd be bound to get his foot in it afore long, an' sure enuff he did."

"Haul! Rube, I shouted, an' may I never chaw buffer-rump ag'in ef we didn't hev the cussed brute fast an' tight."

"We both laid hold an' histed the bar up a-bit. An' then sez Rube 'We ar got to swing over t'other limb, an' es we goes down, Mrs. Bar 'll kin up, an' with thet over we went."

"Lordy! what a squallin' an' yowlin' an' clawin' thar war es thet bar passed us, goin' up es we slid down."

"Thar he war safe, hangin' by one fore leg, an' we on the groun'."

"Well, I hilt fast, while Rube run an' fetched the rifles, an' then twarn't long afore we made meat uv thet bar, an'—"

"Yes, boyces, she-bars ar bad sum'times."

THE SMALL CHANGE OF TIME.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

There was a time when life was fair,
And pleasure made the moments fly;
There was a time when I could share
The smiles of many a kindly eye,
The warmth of many a heart, but oh
That time is in the long ago!

There was a time that I could boast
A thousand friendships firm and free;
There was a time when I could trust,
A time when I could trusted be,
But ah! the years have changed me so
From what I was so long ago!

There was a time when I could sing
Light-hearted songs as wildly gay
As any bird in opening spring;
But now, to hear my voice, you'd say,
'Your time is somewhat twisted, though,
Did you sing that way long ago?'

There was a time when I could wear
Close-fitting boots, both small and neat;
But them I never more shall bear—
John Bunnicorn is on my feet!
And now my gait is halt and slow,
Without the grace of long ago.

There was a time when fifteen cents
Was quite a fortune in my yest, and
And almost purchased all my wants;
But things have got intensely worse!
I haven't got fifteen cents to show,
So scarce is change since long ago.

There was a time when I could spin
Rhymes to my sweetheart all the day;
I poetized for nothing then,
Which now I can not do for pay.
I wrote lines on my lover's brow,
But time writes his upon mine now.

Beat Time's Notes.

WASHINGTON'S body-servant, as a general thing, is not all dead yet. I met him the other day looking hale and hearty. He did not recognize me at first, but when I told him who I was, he knew then it was me. He gave me a little bit of his history. He was born in 1492, and became Washington's body-servant the moment he entered his service for that purpose, and continued in it as long as G. W. had a body to serve. He used to take a great interest in smoking the stumps of Washington's cigars, which were of good odor and order, and also interested himself in the general magnificence of his boots, and the odd coppers which he would leave lying around loose. He said, strange as it may seem, that G. W. used to eat victuals—he was sure of that, because he had eaten out of the same dish with him—when any thing was left in the dish after he was through. He remembered a good many things about him; and considered him one of the best companions he ever had, and was very much troubled to think the newspapers were always reporting his death, at least once a month regularly. He said he had often seen Washington ride his celebrated horse, Bucephalus, and that the only things Washington ever regretted were that he should never have a chance to ride behind Dexter with the *New York Ledger*, or give Jim Fisk any opportunity to snub him. These he deplored very much. He said Washington once caught him making a personal appropriation of his wine, and pronounced a curse upon him, saying he should never have the pleasant amusement of dying until his celebrated hatchet was presented to the editor of a newspaper; so, as he stands no chance of his ever changing his sphere, undertakers waste their time in waiting for his loss to their gain. Newspapers will please notice this fact. If he ever does die he will notify them in person.

A FISH SOUP.—Pour a gallon of water in a kettle; add four potatoes and throw out the water; put in three pints of milk and take out the potatoes; add a lump of butter, about as big as a piece of a brick; give the milk to the pigs, drop in a piece of fat pork; and remove the butter, then add a few beans, which you will instantly throw out with the pork; now put a quart of water in and let it come to a boil; add a little milk, and dilute the whole with one pint of whiskey; strengthen it with plenty of sugar, and grate some nutmeg in it to improve the twang. It is to be eaten while hot, and is said to be very nourishing.

If that young lady over the way, who plays the piano by ear and sings by nose, and who was not born to die, knew how her music sets my teeth on edge and my hair on end, like quills upon a fretful inkstand, she would either take a dose of strychnine, or go into a convent to lecture on Woman's Rights. But, I live in hopes that her voice will finally file itself in two, and the piano burst its boiler, or go through into the cellar.

SUNDAY is indeed a blessed boon. It is a day when we who have laboriously laid around all week can rest. It is an oasis in a desert of days. It is a day when we are all kings, and can walk down street dressed up in our best clothes without being annoyed by the tailor; but an especial blessing is it to those who have fashionable pewes.

SPEAKING of a late skirmish in France, a dispatch said that blood ran freely, but neglected to add that the bodies went with it.

It is the right of all manners to speak of a young lady friend as being an old acquaintance.

If milk is ten cents a quart, how much will two grindstones buy? Solution: subtract the water from the milk, multiply with a quart of old, add some sugar, and divide with me; the result will be all that the heart could wish.

A BROKEN five-dollar bill can never be mended, and the fragments of a broken promise are worthless.

WEARERS of rear additions of the head, in the shape of chignons, should be very judicious and careful about the bugs said to inhabit them; but they are notified that there are other bugs besides the jute-bug.

WIFE, if your husband comes home from the office at the early hour of one o'clock in the morning, quietly stumbles up stairs, softly knocks over the table and a chair or two, sits down on the baby in the cradle, drinks a bottle of the baby's soothing syrup, tells you to "keep y'r words to y'rself, I ain't drunk, nor a bit of it (hie)," without any other signs of drunkenness, you can rest assured that his official business has had a depressing effect upon his mind, and it should be your loving duty to get him a little soda, or give him a thundering kicking with a broomstick.

BEAT TIME.